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10¢**

**A RED LACEY NOVELETTE By GEORGE BRUCE**

**A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION**

# **POPULAR DETECTIVE**

**AUG.**

## **DEATH IN A COTTAGE**

**A Novelette of  
Mystery and Action  
By PAUL ERNST**

## **DEATH ON THE S-13**

**A Complete  
Spy Novelette  
By STEVE  
FISHER**

## **MURDER INSURANCE**

**A Novelette of a  
Death Racket  
By CHARLES  
MARQUIS WARREN**



# GREATEST BARGAIN

## IN TEN YEARS

### Remington NOISELESS Portable NOW 10¢ A DAY!

**10-DAY FREE TRIAL.** Now for the first time in history you can own a real Remington Noiseless Portable for only 10¢ a day or \$3 a month. Think of it! The finest Remington Portable ever built at the lowest terms we have ever offered. Every attachment needed for complete writing equipment—PLUS THE FAMOUS NOISELESS FEATURE. Brand new. Not rebuilt. Send coupon today.

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With your New Remington Noiseless Portable we will send you—absolutely FREE—a 19-page course in typing. It teaches the Touch System, used by all expert typists. It is simply written and completely illustrated. Instructions are as simple as A, B, C. Even a child can easily understand this method. A little study and the average person, child or adult, becomes fascinated. Follow this course during the 10-Day Trial Period we give you with your typewriter and you will wonder why you ever took the trouble to write letters by hand.



*Mail Now!*

Remington Rand Inc., Dept. 169-S,  
315 4th Avenue, New York, N. Y.  
Please tell me how I can get a new Remington Noiseless Portable typewriter,  
plus FREE typing course and carrying case, for only 10¢ a day. Also send me  
new illustrated catalogue.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_



**MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE  
10-DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER**

## FACTORY TO YOU

The gem of all portables. Imagine a machine that speaks in a whisper . . . that removes all limitations of time or place. You can write in a library, a sick room, a Pullman berth without the slightest fear of disturbing others. And in addition to quiet, a superb performance literally makes the words seem to flow from the machine. Equipped with all attachments that make for complete writing equipment, the Remington Noiseless Portable produces manifold and stencil cutting of truly exceptional character. Furnished in black with shining chromium attachments.

**SPECIFICATIONS.** Standard Keyboard. Finished in glistening black with chromium attachments. Takes paper 9.5 inches wide. Writes lines 8.2 inches wide. Standard size, 12 yard ribbon. Makes up to 7 clear legible carbons. Back spacer. Full size platen. Paper fingers, roller

type. Black key cards with white letters. Double shift key and shift lock. Right and left carriage release. Right and left cylinder knobs. Large cushion rubber feet. Single or double space adjustment. All the modern features plus NOISELESS operation.

**MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES OPEN.** Hundreds of jobs are waiting for people who can type. A typewriter helps you put your ideas on paper in logical, impressive form . . . helps you write clear, understandable sales reports, letters, articles, stories. A Remington Portable has started many a young man and woman on the road to success.



**A GIFT FOR ALL THE FAMILY.** If you want a gift for birthday, Christmas or Graduation . . . one Father, Mother, Sister or Brother will use and appreciate for years to come . . . give a Remington Noiseless Portable. We will send a Remington Noiseless Portable to anyone you name, and you can still pay for it at only 10¢ a day. Few gifts are so universally pleasing as a new Remington Noiseless Portable. Write today.



## FREE CARRYING CASE

Also under this new Purchase Plan we will send you FREE with every Remington Noiseless Portable a special carrying case sturdily built of 3-ply wood. This handsome case is covered with heavy du Pont fabric. The top is removed by one motion, leaving the machine attached to the base. This makes it easy to use your Remington anywhere—on knees, in chairs, on trains. Don't delay . . . send in the coupon for complete details!

# A Money-Making Opportunity for Men of Character

## EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE FOR AN INVENTION EXPECTED TO REPLACE A MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY

**Costly Work Formerly  
"Sent Out" by Business Men  
Now Done by Themselves  
at a Fraction of the Expense**

**This is a call for men everywhere to handle  
exclusive agency for one of the most  
Unique business inventions of the day.**

Forty years ago the horse and buggy business was supreme—today almost extinct. Twenty years ago the phonograph industry ran into many millions—today practically a relic. Only a comparatively few forethought men saw the fortunes ahead in the automobile and the radio. Yet irresistible waves of public buying swept these men to fortune, and sent the buggy and the phonograph into the discard. So are great successes made by men able to detect the shift in public favor from one industry to another.

*Now another change is taking place. An old established industry—an integral and important part of the nation's structure—in which millions of dollars change hands every year—is in thousands of cases being replaced by a truly astonishing, simple invention which does the work better—more rapidly—AND AT A COST OFTEN AS LOW AS 2% OF WHAT IS ORDINARILY PAID! It has not required very long for men who have taken over the rights to this valuable invention to do a remarkable business, and show earnings which in these times are almost unheard of for the average man.*

**Not a "Gadget"—  
Not a "Knick-Knack"—**

*but a valuable, proved device which  
has been sold successfully by business  
men as well as seasoned  
veterans.*

Make no mistake—this is no novelty—no flimsy creation which the inventor hopes to put on the market. You probably have seen nothing like it yet—perhaps never dreamed of the existence of such a device—it has already been used by corporations of outstanding prominence—by dealers of great corporations—by their branches—by doctors, newspaper publishers—schools—hospitals, etc., and by thousands of small business men. You don't have to convince a man that he should use an electric bulb to light his office instead of a gas lamp. Nor do you have to sell the same business man the idea that some day he may need something like this invention. The need is already there—the money is usually being spent right at that very moment—and the desirability of saving the greatest part of this expense is obvious immediately.

**Some of the Savings  
You Can Show**

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for \$11 which formerly could have cost them over \$100. A building supply corporation pays over \$70, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,000. An automobile dealer pays our representative \$15, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$60.00, possible cost if done outside the business being well over \$2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. There are just a few of the many actual cases which we place in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across startling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

**Profits Typical of  
the Young, Growing Industry**

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, \$5.83 can be your share. On \$150 worth of business, your share can be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

**This Business Has  
Nothing to Do With  
House to House Canvassing**

Nor do you have to know anything about high pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—whatever else the customer says he will accept—at our risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This does away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply tell what you offer, showing proof of success in that customer's particular line of business. Then leave the invention without a dollar down. It starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation should actually produce enough cash money to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time. You then call back, collect your money. Nothing is so convincing as our offer to let retailers speak for themselves without risk to the customer! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

## EARNINGS

One man in California earned over \$1,600 per month for three months—close to \$5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office, counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A Connecticut man writes he has made \$55.00 in a single day's time. Texas man nets over \$300 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from \$5 to \$60 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

**No Money Need Be Risked**

In trying this business out, you can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. If you are looking for a business that is not overdone—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the buyer relief from a burdensome, but unavoidable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory into which you can set foot—regardless of size—that is a security but does not have any price ceiling to contend with at other times—this is a business that is a business looks as if it is worth investigating, get on track work as at once for the rights in your territory—don't delay—because the chances are that if you do wait, someone else will have written to us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—we'd both be sorry. So for convenience, are the *express sales*—but send it right away—or worse if you wish. But do not lose. Address

**F. E. ARMSTRONG, President  
Depo. 404TH, Mobile, Ala.**

## RUSH FOR EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY PROPOSITION

**F. E. ARMSTRONG, Pres., Dept. 404TH, Mobile, Ala.**  
Without obligation to me, send me full information on your proposition.

Name or Best.....  
Res. Address.....  
City.....  
State.....

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Read our Companion Magazines: The Phantom Detective, Thrilling Detective, Thrilling Western, Thrilling Confessions, Thrilling Ranch Stories, Thrilling Adventures, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Thrilling Sport, Thrilling Mystery, Thrilling Love, Sky Fighters, The Lone Eagle, Popular Love, Popular Sports, Popular Western, G-Men, Everyday Astrology, and Texas Rangers.

# New 6-Volt TRINDL Electric ARC WELDER

PATENTS PENDING

Works on Storage Battery  
or 110 Volt Light Circuit  
**A REAL WELDER**

RETAILS  
FOR

**\$3.75  
EA.**

## FACTS

Here are just a few excerpts from the many letters of praise we have received from Trindl Electric Arc boosters.

"Please find enclosed for 12 welders by return mail for I am about sold out now. They are selling fine."—W. C. Anderson, Nebr.

"Received my Trindl Arc Welder and am both pleased and surprised."—Louis F. Giller, Ohio.

"Results are very gratifying with your welder. I am enclosing an order for 12 more Electric Arc Welders."—Nelson O. Lyster, Florida.

"I received my welder, and it is a regular repair shop in itself."—J. R. Harper, La.

"I sold 4 of your Trindl Electric Arc Welders in three minutes."—C. Gillies, Canada.

"I sold 9 welders in my first ten calls."—F. W. Stice, Iowa.

Men, here is the hottest specialty item that has come along in years. A real honest to goodness electric arc welder that does a man size job. Built sturdy of the finest materials. Requires no mechanical knowledge—any one can use it. Every demonstration should make a sale. This new Trindl Electric Arc Welder is made possible by the invention of a low voltage carbon which gets white hot from the current of an ordinary 6 volt storage battery such as in your automobile. It only uses about 20 to 25 amperes of current which is about the same current drawn as 4 headlight bulbs, yet develops about 7000 degrees of heat.

## MELTS IRON AND STEEL INSTANTLY

The Trindl Welder is simple to use. Expert welding can be done by anyone. The

Trindl Arc Welder is the only battery welder that, after a rigid test, has been approved by the Automotive Test Laboratories of America. It is ideal for making permanent fender repairs—also for broken castings, radiators, cylinders, water jackets, holes in auto bodies, hog troughs, boilers, tanks, milk cans, radios, batteries, etc. Iron, Steel, Brass, Copper and Tin can be worked on for a quick and permanent repair. The repaired part will be as strong as before.

## NEW 110 VOLT CONVERTER MAKES FULL SIZE PROFESSIONAL UNIT

This new converter is used on any 110 volt 60 cycle electric light socket in place of a storage battery. It is especially designed to be used with the Trindl Electric Arc Welder—COSTS LESS THAN A GOOD BATTERY—The combination makes a full size professional electric arc welder that everybody can use. Ideal for fender and repair shop needs. This is a sensation, not only in price but also in actual results. The converter represents the same fine construction and engineering skill as the arc welder. The complete outfit, including the transformer, is easily portable so that it can be brought right to the job.

**USERS SWEAR BY IT**—The price is so low that now anyone can afford to have a real welding outfit. Think of the profit you can make introducing this Trindl Welder and Converter—a simple five minute demonstration should make a sale to every interested prospect, especially when they hear the amazingly low price. Garages, radio and battery men, tinners, sheet metal workers, janitors, farmers and home-owners all need the Trindl Welder and Converter.

**ACT NOW!** There are big profits and a steady business waiting for you taking care of your territory for us. Don't let someone else get in before you—Send coupon today.

**TRINDL PRODUCTS**  
2229-PA Calumet Ave., Chicago, Ill.

\$10.50 a day profit for you for only selling 6 Trindl Arc Welders. No matter where you turn, you will find people who will want to buy arc welders from you. Garages, shop men, radio repair men, farmers, home-owners, mechanics, janitors, all of them need Trindl Electric Arc Welders. Be the man in your territory to clean up with Trindl.

## MAIL COUPON NOW!

TRINDL PRODUCTS  
2229-PA Calumet Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois

Yes! Rush me free particulars of how I can make big money with Trindl Electric Arc Welders and Converter. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name .....  
Local Address.....  
City .....  
State .....

---

# • Official Business •

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**N**EXT month we bring you  
—THE SAINT.

The world's greatest outlaw-sleuth! Suave, dapper and debonair—daring, sophisticated and keen-witted! Himself the most persistent manhunter of them all—he is in turn hunted by underworld and police forces alike! A character that has taken detective story fans by storm—created by a master of mystery thrillers, **LESLIE CHARTERIS!**

Simon Templar—THE SAINT—returns to the pages of **POPULAR DETECTIVE** in THE SAINT'S PROGRESS, a complete novel which is threaded with thrills from the first page to the last!

With supreme agility the roguish Saint tricks his traditional enemy, Inspector Teal, into helping him! And so Scotland Yard, unaware, puts its power behind the activities of Simon Templar.

## International Intrigue

It's a baffling international plot that THE SAINT is called upon to solve in THE SAINT'S PROGRESS! The trail is blazed with sudden death and shadowed with sinister secrets.

One slender clue—and it means everything to THE SAINT, and nothing to Scotland Yard. But—

Just wait until you read it! You'll be breathless with excitement as the outlaw-sleuth traps a powerful ring of master counterfeiters! Your pulses will pound as you near the startling conclusion of this brand-new **LESLIE CHARTERIS** novel!

## Senor Muerte

Next on the list of headliners for September is **DARK PASSPORT**, a complete novelette of waterfront mystery by John Hawkins. It's another daring exploit of *Senor Muerte*, the reckless fighter who faces gangster guns boldly! Muerte, almost a legendary figure, is his own judge

and jury. His trials are swift, his sentences merciless. Five men have tried to outdraw him—these five are dead!

Each of these five men is a killer, each beyond the reach of the law—until *Senor Muerte* traps them!

In **DARK PASSPORT**, Muerte lifts the black cloak of mystery from silent, black waters that hide a secret of grim, bloody murder. It's a swift-moving novelette of solo courage and quick thinking pitted against the snares of crime.

## Magic and Murder

Diamondstone is a magician, and, like all other gentlemen of the abracadabra, he despises the charlatans who employ trickery for evil purposes.

Dal Rama, Blessed Guardian of the Buddha of Bhutan, with his turban included, is every bit as tall as the Great Diamondstone—and almost as clever.

THE BUDDHA WHISPERS, a complete novelette by G. T. Fleming-Roberts, in our next issue, shows what happens when a modern Houdini matches wits with a cunning Mephistopheles! Trick for trick, stunt for stunt, the two mighty masters of legerdemain and ventriloquism duel to a finish—and murder is trumps!

In addition to these headliners, many other crime and mystery stories will appear in the next issue.

John Blakeman, Boston, Mass., writes: "Your magazine is improving with every issue. Keep it up." That's typical of many comments we are receiving from readers—and it's *your* letters of criticism and suggestions that are helping us improve! So keep those missives rolling in. All your ideas are taken into account when we plan future issues. Thanks!

—THE EDITOR.



# HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED—THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!

MY RAISE DIDN'T COME THROUGH MARY—I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP. IT ALL LOOKS SO HOPELESS.



IT ISN'T HOPELESS EITHER BILL. WHY DON'T YOU TRY A NEW FIELD LIKE RADIO?

77

TOM GREEN WENT INTO RADIO AND HE'S MAKING GOOD MONEY, TOO. I'LL SEE HIM RIGHT AWAY.



BILL, JUST MAILING THAT COUPON GAVE ME A QUICK START TO SUCCESS IN RADIO, MAIL THIS ONE TONIGHT



TOM'S RIGHT—AN UNTRAINED MAN HASN'T A CHANCE. I'M GOING TO TRAIN FOR RADIO TOO. IT'S TODAY'S FIELD OF GOOD PAY OPPORTUNITIES



U.S. MAIL

TRAINING FOR RADIO IS EASY AND I'M GETTING ALONG FAST—

SOON I CAN GET A JOB SERVICING SETS—OR IN A BROADCASTING STATION  
OR INSTALLING LOUD SPEAKER SYSTEMS  
THERE'S NO END TO THE GOOD JOBS FOR THE TRAINED RADIO MAN



YOU SURE KNOW RADIO—MY SET NEVER SOUNDED BETTER

THAT'S \$15 I'VE MADE THIS WEEK IN SPARE TIME

THANKS!



N.R.I. TRAINING CERTAINLY PAYS. OUR MONEY WORRIES ARE OVER AND WE'VE A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD IN RADIO.

OH BILL, IT'S WONDERFUL YOU'VE GONE AHEAD SO FAST IN RADIO.



## HERE'S PROOF THAT MY TRAINING PAYS



N.R.I. Training Increases Yearly Salary \$1,200

\$10 to \$25 a Week in Spare Time



"Since securing my operator's license through N. R. I. Training, I've been regularly employed and am now chief engineer with WJBL. My salary has increased \$1,200 in Radio. —JULIUS C. VERSTEL, Station WJBL, Gadsden, Alabama.

"I am making from \$10 to \$25 a week in spare time while still holding my regular job as a machinist. I owe my success to N. R. I.—WM. F. RUPP, 130 W. 8th St., Conshohocken, Pa.



\$3,500 a Year in Own Business

"After completing the N. R. I. Course, I became Radio Editor of the Buffalo Courier. Later I started a Radio service business of my own, and have averaged over \$3,500 a year."—T. J. TELAAR, 664 Broadway, Buffalo, New York.



## I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME In Your Spare Time For A GOOD RADIO JOB

Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week

Do you want to make more money? Broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay up to \$3,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays as much as \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts own their own full or part time Radio businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to \$6,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay and see the world. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, and loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises many good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in these branches of Radio.

Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

Practically every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets. They show you how to do Radio repair jobs that you can cash in on quickly. Throughout your training I send plans and ideas that have made good spare time money for hundreds of fellows. I send special equipment which gives you practical experience—shows you how to conduct experiments and build circuits which illustrate important Radio principles.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 18 years old. It describes Radio's spare time and full time opportunities, also those coming in Television; tells about my training in Radio and Television; shows you actual letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning; tells about my Money Back Agreement.

MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a post card—NOW!  
J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 7105  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 7109  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-day method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please Write Plainly.)

NAME.....AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

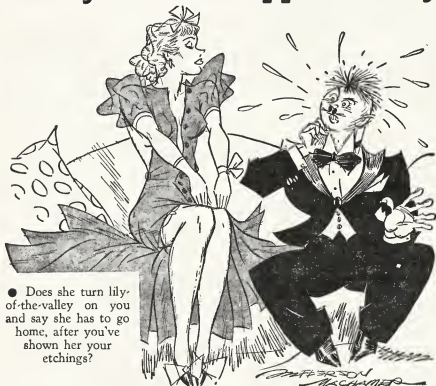
CITY.....STATE.....



J. E. SMITH, President National Radio Institute  
The man who has directed the home study training of more men for Radio than any other man in America.

THIS FREE BOOK HAS HELPED HUNDREDS OF MEN MAKE MORE MONEY

# How's your Sex Appeal today?



● Does she turn lily-of-the-valley on you and say she has to go home, after you've shown her your etchings?

WHEN she babbles about Bob Considine and Peter Arno and Heywood Broun and Jeff Machamer, do you grunt and ask where the devil she has been meeting these new guys?

When you cut in on her and dust off the old one about the traveling salesman and the farmer's daughter, do you wonder why she flags the stag-line?

When you invite her up to your room to see your etchings, does she turn lily-of-the-valley on you and say she has to go home?

And, after you've spent all your money on theatre tickets and taxis and lobster suppers, does she turn a cold shoulder on you and go for a perfectly nondescript freshman just because he knows so many cute paper games?

Fella, if your answer to even one of these pertinent questions is "yes," you need COLLEGE HUMOR. You need it badly! You need COLLEGE HUMOR in your life to keep you on-your-toes about the smart writers and artists.

You need COLLEGE HUMOR, with its bright quips and cartoons, to keep your line whittled to a fine edge. You need the "Mental Merry-Go-Round," a monthly game feature, to make you a social success.

And most of all, you need COLLEGE HUMOR tossed casually about your room as bait for skittish maidens. (Actual figures prove that COLLEGE HUMOR gets 50% better response than etchings.)

Don't delay a minute! Clip the coupon below and send it off NOW.

**SPECIAL!**  
**NINE ISSUES FOR**  
**\$1.00**

SUBSCRIPTION DEPT., COLLEGE HUMOR PopD-8  
23 WEST 48th STREET, NEW YORK CITY

My dollar is pinned to this coupon. Please send the next nine issues to:

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

(Foreign, \$1.00)

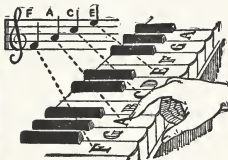


# Easy as **A B C**



## New Invention!

No more fumbling at the keys! No more endless practicing of scales! The wonderful "Note Finder" shows you where every note is located. You soon become familiar with the keyboard.



## Now You Can Play Any Instrument by this Amazingly Simple Method

**EVERYTHING** is clear, simple, easy to understand. You can learn to play your favorite instrument by *actual* notes.

Take the piano, for example. Instead of fumbling at the keys, trying to locate the proper notes, you merely use the "Note Finder," the wonderful invention that tells you exactly which keys to strike.

And the "Note Finder" is a new short-cut exclusive with the U. S. School that make it possible to learn in a surprisingly short time. You actually play a real tune almost at the very start! And it is only a matter of weeks before you will surprise your friends—and yourself—with your amazing progress.

Yet this is no "trick" method. There are no "numbers," no "memory stunts." You learn to play by note, just as the best musicians do. But the drudgery has been eliminated. This new method is as agreeable as it is rapid. Strange as it may seem, you'll really enjoy every minute of it.

### Learn to Play Popular Music at Sight

Almost before you realize it, you'll be able to pick up the average sheet music and understand it! You'll learn to read music, popular and classic, and play it from the notes. You'll acquire a life-long ability to entertain your friends, amuse yourself, and if you like, make money in one of the most pleasant and best paid of professions. You'll be popular and admired, showered with invitations to good times, welcomed wherever you go.

Yes, you'll reap golden rewards from the few minutes a day you spend learning to play. You need no private teacher, no special talent. And the cost is trifling, only a few pennies a day. What's more, all your sheet music, dozens of pieces, is supplied without extra cost!

What instrument will it be? The piano, violin, saxophone, guitar, piano accordion? Choose your favorite

### LEARN TO PLAY BY NOTE

Piano Guitar  
Violin Saxophone  
Organ Mandolin  
Tenor Sello  
Hawaiian Guitar  
Piano Accordion  
Or Any Other Instrument

—you'll be amazed to discover how quickly you can learn it. Every step is made crystal clear in print—and pictures. First you are told how a thing is done, then a picture shows you how. Even a child can learn by this A-B-C method. Yet it is so absolutely right that accomplished musicians find it a revelation.

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# I POSED IN THE NUDE



*When Another Girl's Disgrace Drove  
Me to the Brink of Despair!*

**M**Y HEART beat a strange tattoo when Garth Endicott took me in his arms and we danced. I suddenly felt as if I were floating in flower-scented space, and that only Garth's strong arms were holding me to earth as they were holding me to him.

Nor did I know that in that astoundingly blissful moment of love's first realization that I was shivering, until he said, his deep voice smooth, a little amused: "You're trembling, Karen. Cold?"

I laughed, and the sound of my own laughter in the warm, crowded, dim-lit nightclub seemed to bring me back to earth, give me confidence.

"No," I said. "I'm not used to champagne. This is only the second time I've ever tasted it."

"Really?" He was staring down at me, his eyes scrutinizing the upturned earnestness of my face. "Funny! But you don't look like a champagne girl—even if you are Penny Hayden's friend."

Something queer struck into my heart. Of course, Garth must know all about Penny and Talbot Langley. Did he imagine—

When we went back to our table, I made a gallant pretense of trying to be nice to Nap Durat, yet throughout the evening I was aware of Garth Endicott's dark eyes upon me, mocking, quizzical.

Nap and I left Penny and Talbot at the club about two. In his car I felt his hand closing over mine. "Don't be frightened," he said and laughed. "I am not going to make love to you."

I withdrew my fingers. "Should I be disappointed?"

"That," he shrugged, "is as you will. But I have another purpose. I wish you to pose for me. You have the loveliest figure of any girl I've ever seen."

"But I've never done that sort of work," I told him. "Wouldn't you be better off with someone more experienced?"

"No," said Nap Durat. "I want you. I will pay you fifty dollars if you will come to my studio tomorrow afternoon. Bring your friend, Miss Hayden, with you, if you wish."

"I—" I started breathlessly to accept, but he was speaking again.

"Of course you will pose in the nude."

I felt myself choke. Then—

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# Neither Bombs Nor Tommy Guns Block the

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*Red Lacey*

By **GEORGE  
BRUCE**

Author of "Terror at the Track,"  
"Bloody Hundred," etc.



*With a grating sound*



*The girl looked on, horror-stricken*

## DEATH

### CHAPTER I

#### BACKBONE OF THE NATION

**R**ED LACEY'S little Ford convertible weaved expertly in and out of the dense traffic of Fallon Street. Lacey sat behind the wheel, driving with unconscious skill, his steel-grey eyes filled with a strangely ruminative light, his black fedora hat pushed back over the queerly white expanse of his forehead so that the crisp, curling, brick-red hair which clung tightly to his skull was visible.

## Red Lacey Goes Berserk When Terror

## Path of a Courageous, Hardboiled Sleuth!



*the sap broke teeth and mouth*

# MASQUERADE

Both sides of the street were lined with pushcarts. There were car tracks in the center of the street and a multitude of trucks and drays pounded and jounced over the cobblestone paving. The pushcarts were lined in a solid mass. Piled on them was an assortment of merchandise appalling and profuse—piled up, jumbled masses of merchandise which fat, perspiring women pawed over lackadaisically, watched by sleepy-eyed, almost inert merchants who seemed completely disinterested in salesmanship or customer interest.

Fruits and vegetables, meats, garments, hardware, notions, odds and ends of bolts of cloth, haberdashery, cart after cart, pushed into position indiscriminately. And the hot sun beat down into the narrow canyon of Fallon Street, and the cluttered pavements and cobblestones gave off shimmering heat eddies until the space between the ancient brick buildings became like the interior of a crematory.

Draymen and truck drivers cursed lethargically. Trolley motormen clanged bells half-heartedly. Even

## Routs His Old Home Stamping Grounds!

the children playing in the street, at peril of life and limb, seemed to run and to yell in slow motion. The windows of the tenements were festooned with pillows, and on the pillows, ladies of the neighborhood leaned on meaty elbows—leaned with a fine disregard for the random display of feminine anatomy which should have been reserved for the eyes of more or less fond husbands—leaned and conversed hazily, as if no zest remained in neighborhood gossip.

Strange smells, hot, foreign, impregnated the heat.

Lacey's eyes looked at the traffic of Fallon Street, looked at the faces, the skull-caps, the beards, the black vestments, the tired, dragged-out women, the white-faced children, the straining horses, and the sizzling trucks.

BESIDES him, surrounded by an aura of almost regal splendor, rode Willie Quirk. Willie's uplifted nose was distinctly sniffing at Fallon Street odors. His freckled, impish face was drawn up into a grimace of impatience.

"Jeez, what a joint!" complained Willie. "How come you didn't cut over to LaFayette Street and get a decent break goin' uptown?"

The cabriolet was stopped by the immovable traffic ahead. Lacey's head turned, his eyes looked at Willie Quirk. The queer, rapt look was still in the steel-grey depths.

"Every now and then, Willie, I deliberately drive through here," he said strangely. "It kind of helps a guy to keep things straight in his mind. It kind of keeps his sense of values in proportion."

"I don't get it," groaned Willie. "It's hotter than the inside of a rhumba dancer's instep."

"Look, Willie," said Lacey, with a nod toward the teeming sidewalks. "See those pushcarts? See those stores? See those people?"

"Sure!" grunted Willie. "So what?"

"Those people are the backbone of New York City," remarked Lacey in the same strange voice. "And

people like them are the backbone of the whole United States of America."

Willie Quirk merely stared at Lacey's face. There was a little frown of worry and perplexity on his forehead. He looked at Lacey's face anxiously as if to assure himself that his beloved "Chief" was physically and mentally fit and in no danger of heat prostration. He nodded vaguely.

"Uh—oh—sure. Backbone. You said it, Chief."

"See those little metal signs on those pushcarts, Willie?"

"Them peddler's licenses?"

"Yeah. Know what that means?"

"Sure, they go down to City Hall and put up a couple of bucks and get one of them tin signs, they tack it on the cart, and they're in business!"

"More than that!" smiled Lacey.

"Those little tin signs represent taxes paid. Thousands of dollars going into the treasury of the City of New York and to the Government. Those stores there on both sides of the street. Every one of them pays a license, and taxes on top of that. Taxes mean money. Taxes build big, beautiful buildings like the new court buildings we just passed. Taxes, the dollars—sweat-covered, grimy dollars from Fallon Street, and other streets like it."

"Well, gosh, everybody pays taxes, don't they?" asked Willie. "Why, didn't that Man with the Whiskers make me pay out on that dough we made? Ain't I a taxpayer?"

"It's a little different with these people, Willie," said Lacey in the same, almost sombre tone. "They get so little back for their money. I guess, proportionately, they pay more taxes than anybody else in the country. They pay 'em more honestly. You see, they can't cheat. They don't make enough to hire fast talking, slippery lawyers to chisel the Government and the city. They can't cover up. They just pay what they're told to pay, and no questions asked. And the damned shame of it is that a lot of the money they pay goes uptown to make Central Park sections beautiful—so that the tax

chiselers can have lovely places to walk their dogs. A lot of the sweat-stained money that comes out of Fallon Street goes uptown."

Lacey's eyes closed for a minute. Perhaps the glare of the sun had something to do with it. His voice became distant.

"Squalor and magnificence, side by side. Maybe, upstairs in one of those tenement rooms, a little kid is standing with a fiddle under his chin. A little kid who never had quite enough to eat. And the bow is going back and forth across the strings, and the little kid doesn't even feel the heat. And maybe, someday, that little kid will stand up in front of a boiled-shirted audience in Carnegie Hall, and he'll be another Elman, or Heifetz.

"And maybe, in another room, a kid is sitting in front of a piano—a piano. Maybe an old man is going around with holes in his shoes, and a mother is not going to a doctor about that pain in her side to get that piano. And his fingers are pushing down those keys—and maybe another Gershwin will come out of that boy.

"Or another kid is standing up on the roof, looking down on this street, dreamy eyed, drinking it in—and another Fannie Hurst is being born."

"What—fan dancers, too?" asked Willie.

"Fannie Hurst is a writer, Willie." grinned Lacey suddenly.

"Oh, 'scuse me. I guess the first name kind of threw me off. Sure."

"Fallon Street has something Park Avenue never will have," said Lacey. "Fallon Street has its dreams—it sleeps with the dreams. It forgets the heat and the smells and the clamor and the gongs. Dreams—round-eyed people, shuffling in here from other countries—bringing with them nothing but dreams. Exploited, gouged, victimized—still they cling to the dreams. Dreams are life down here; I guess that's why I like to drive through Fallon Street. Park Avenue has no dreams. Park Avenue hasn't feeling enough to dream, isn't close enough to life."

"Gee, Chief," said Willie, "you got relatives down here?"

"See that corner?" asked Lacey with a faint, white smile.

"Sure, Fallon and Orchid. Why?"

"My grandfather was born right around that corner and lived there to the last day of his life."

"Your grandfather?" marveled Willie.

"Sure. Any reason why I shouldn't have a grandfather? Most people have."

"No—no. Only—Gee, it's funny, hearin' you talk about a grandfather! Somehow a guy gets the idea that you was always here, that you were born grown-up. Get it? Just kinda happened along, just as you are."

Lacey grinned.

THE traffic started its slow move eastward. The tired horses strained at traces. The iron-rimmed wheels rolled and crunched on the cobblestones. The truck engines chugged, raced, backfired. The trolley bells clanged querulously.

The heat beat down, soaked into bodies.

And over the grinding pound of the traffic there was a sudden shrieking voice. A single voice, uplifted in a hideous, throat-straining scream. The sound ripped through the ordinary sounds of the street like a knife stabbing to the heart. The horses suddenly stopped. The truck engines were stilled.

A silence gripped Fallon Street. A silence which seemed made up of white, dead-eyed faces, staring toward the source of the scream.

A girl stood in front of a shop. Her hands were beating her breast. Long black hair, seemingly torn violently out of place, fell down over her shoulders. Her eyes were wide and staring. She stood, stark, in the doorway of the store, and screamed. Over and over.

In a breath Lacey was on the sidewalk. The door of the cabriolet was still open. The car stood in the center of the stalled traffic. He glanced once at the girl's face. She was beautiful, almost Oriental. She wore



a one-piece dress. The dress was ripped at the throat, exposing one full, beautifully rounded breast. Her eyes were wild with fear—and new-born grief.

Lacey grabbed her by an arm, whirled her around.

"What's the matter with you?" he barked at her, harshly.

The scream died out of her throat. She whimpered a little. Her face was ashen. Her throat moved spasmodically. She seemed unable to speak. She turned her head, her eyes stared into the shadows of the store.

Lacey looked inside the door. There was a crumpled something on the floor, close to the counter. A heavily veined, white hand outflung inertly, the wrist disappearing into a rusty black alpaca coat. Lacey was inside the store in three strides. He banged the door after him. He dragged the girl with him.

The thing on the floor was a man; an old man. An old man with a white beard. A skull-cap was pushed down over the old man's eyes. The angle was ribald. He lay quietly, half on his back, on his side. There was a little trickle of blood running from the corner of his mouth. His eyes were closed. There was an ugly bruise on the parchmentlike flesh covering his jaw.

Excepting for that, he might have been asleep, over-weary, asleep on the floor of his store.

Lacey picked up the hand. The hand was warm but soft and inert. He felt for a pulse. There was no pulse. The old man was dead.

The girl stood, quiet now, looking down. Outside, faces pressed against glass of the window and door. Lacey looked over his shoulder. He got to his feet, snatched open the door, spoke angrily.

"You people scram!" he told the crowd. "The old man fainted—heat—nothing serious. Scram now, or—"

There was authority in his voice. The authority these people knew. They looked at his face. There was authority there, too. They drifted away, talking to themselves, looking back.

Lacey strode through the already impatient traffic. "Drive the bus in front of the store," he told Willie Quirk. "The hell with these guys in the trucks and things. Put it up on the sidewalk if you have to—and stay with it. I'll be in that little store."

## CHAPTER II

### "PROTECTIVE UNION"



LACEY went back to the store, entered, closed the door after him. He stood facing the girl. Her face was quiet, but still ashen, like a mask. Her hands were clenched into hard fists.

"He's—dead?" she asked quietly, al-

most resignedly.

Lacey nodded. "He's dead," he said. Something rushed up into his throat at the look which came into the girl's eyes. Something that seemed to strangle him.

"What happened?" he asked huskily.

"They came back." Her voice spoke out of a semi-stupor. "They said they'd come back—and he'd have to pay. He didn't have the money, so—they did that to him. They hit him—a big man—heavy—with a gold tooth. He hit him in the face, cursed at him—"

"Wait a minute!" said Lacey. "Who? What men? What money did they want?"

"I don't know," said the girl. "I only know they came in the store, maybe ten days ago. They said they were forming a society—union. Yes, a 'protective union' they called it. All the merchants were joining to keep from being robbed—and it would cost Papa twenty dollars a week to belong."

"Well?" grated Lacey, a sudden chill in his voice.

"Papa—laughed. Where would he get twenty dollars a week to join a union? And nobody had ever robbed him or anything in ten years in

business right here. So why should he join a union?"

"And they told him he'd join or else, is that it?" growled Lacey. "He had to pay the twenty bucks a week, whether he wanted to or not?"

She nodded. "How did you know?" asked her dead voice.

"There are a lot of 'unions' like that," said Lacey grimly. "Well, he didn't pay. So?"

"So the two men said they'd come back and he better have the money. So they came back today, and he tried to tell them that he didn't want to join the union, couldn't. And then, one of the men—the big one with the gold tooth—took something black out of his pocket and hit Papa across the mouth and laughed and said next time the price would be fifty dollars a week."

"And they went out, still laughing, eh?" Icy glints were swimming in Lacey's eyes.

"Papa stood there, staring at them, as if—he couldn't feel anything. I tried to keep them from hitting Papa. They hit me, tore my dress. When they went out the door, Papa—he came around the end of the counter, and suddenly he—fell down. I couldn't make him hear—or open his eyes—or anything."

There was a sign on the window. The letters were reversed. Lacey read the sign.

### SAMUEL GOLDEN NOTIONS

He looked away from the window, at the pitiful little stock within the store. At the impeccably neat array of shelves and counters. And the clean, scrubbed floor, and then at the white face, with the trickle of blood oozing from the corner of the mouth.

"He's Samuel Golden?" asked Lacey, as if for something to say, to break the terrible silence and the hoarse breathing of the girl.

She nodded. "Samuel Golden—my—my Father. My name is Rosa, Rosa Golden."

Suddenly she fell, her knees buckled under her weight. She fell

across the black alpaca coat, and the black trousers. Her face buried itself in the white beard. Agony flooded up out of her soul, shook her body.

Lacey stood looking down at her for a moment. Then he lifted her face.

"I've got to talk to you for a moment—I'm sorry," he said.

"Why?" she moaned. "Why should they do this to him? All he ever did was be kind to everybody. Every day of his life he worked. Every day he sat here and worked—and dreamed—a bigger store maybe. He was a good man—his voice—so gentle—his eyes—like a child's—"

"Don't let anyone in here," said Lacey. "Understand? Nobody in here. And don't talk to anyone or go out of that door until I come back."

Her eyes merely looked at him without seeing.

He turned, his own eyes swirling, almost devilish. He closed the front door of the store after him. The kids were playing in the street. The endless procession of trucks and drays went by. Heat eddies steamed up from the cement and pushcarts and cobblestones.

He saw a public telephone sign on a corner store. He went in, closed the door of the booth after him, called Police Headquarters.

"Gimme Johnson of the Homicide Squad," he barked at the police operator.

After a moment he was talking to Johnson. "A little storekeeper named Golden was killed a couple of minutes ago by a couple of thugs. Samuel Golden, four eighty-six Fallon Street. I want you to come down to that address, alone, see? Plain clothes, no police car, nothing. I'll talk to you after you get here. I've got an idea. Remember, nothing that looks like the police, and no sirens, or so help me I'll never give you another break as long as I live."

He went back to the store. He picked Samuel Golden up in his arms, carried him into a back room, put his body on a worn sofa.

Ten minutes later, Johnson came

in. Lacey talked to him in a voice vibrant with nervous energy. Once he broke off to shoot a question at the grief-stricken girl.

"You'd know these two men again if you saw them?"

Her eyes blazed. "Yes," she said simply.

"You'd like to keep them from doing the same thing they did to your father to some other girl's father?"

She shuddered, covered her face with her hands. "Yes, oh yes!" she moaned.

"Don't be afraid," said Lacey kindly. "This is Detective-inspector Johnson of Headquarters. My name is Lacey—Red Lacey. We're going to try to punish the men who did this. We may want you to help a little. Those were bad men. Unless we catch them, they will go on doing things like this. If you don't help us some other girl may lose her father, as you lost yours."

The flame in her black eyes was suddenly dazzling. It seemed to transfigure her whole being. She stood very straight and very white. Her voice shook with emotional undercurrents.

"I am willing to do anything," she said.

Johnson looked at Lacey and nodded.

"I think you've got something there, Sherlock," he admitted. "I'll play ball with you. Play it out, see where it gets you. Only, cut me in when it gets hot and if you need help, holler."

"What help will I need trapping a couple of rats?" asked Lacey.

**N**O ONE saw the dead Samuel Golden taken out of the little store in which he had been buried ten years of his life, with his dreams and ambitions. Johnson took care of that. A litter crew came in the early morning, through the alley behind the store, came silently, departed the same way, bearing the old man between them.

No one knew that Samuel Golden was gone. No one knew he was dead. Because Red Lacey labored for an hour before a mirror, studying

the dead face of the old man, working and molding his own features with infinite care into a perfect resemblance.

A man from Headquarters arrived in a taxi. An expert on make-up, he studied the dead face and head. He departed. An hour after his going a messenger boy delivered a package to the little store. The messenger boy was Willie Quirk, in uniform. The package contained a wig, the exact duplicate of Samuel Golden's hair, and pigment of the proper shading for make-up. Lacey's crisp red hair disappeared under the wig.

So Samuel Golden lay still on the sofa, and Red Lacey sat at a table and copied him, feature for feature, line for line. Even to the little stoop between Samuel Golden's shoulders, and the wart over his right eyebrow.

And while he worked the girl, Rosa, watched, her eyes filled with an almost hypnotic horror—watched her father made to live again in the person of Red Lacey. Watched, as if it might have been a terrible nightmare. Watched in silence.

When Lacey stood up he had Samuel Golden's beard fastened to his own face with spirit gum. The beard masked the young, grim lines of his mouth. He wore the black alpaca coat and the worn black trousers, and the watch-chain, and the skull-cap.

The girl put her hand over her mouth, held her breath.

Lacey kept talking to her all the time he manufactured himself into a replica of the dead storekeeper.

"You must believe it in your heart," he told her. "You must not think of your father as being dead—killed. You must not give a sign that anything has happened in this store, that anything is changed. You must go about your daily affairs, just as you did until today. You must treat me exactly as you treated your father."

She nodded. Lacey's voice went on talking.

"What did you do usually?"

Her voice swam through layers of weary numbness in her brain.

"I—made my Father's meals, and took care of his house. And sang."

"Sang?" said Lacey casually, touching an eye shadow with a pencil. "What did you sing?"

"Folk songs, things he loved."

"You'll have to sing just as you did when—before today—sing the same way—"

Her throat trembled. "He worked so hard so that I could sing. He would sit there, looking at my face when I sang to him, and sometimes the neighbors would come in and listen, and he would be so proud. He used to say 'Someday Rosa, you will sing for the world!'" Her voice broke suddenly. She was looking at his face.

"Sing now," said Lacey.

Her eyes closed. "Sing?" she said hollowly. "Sing?" Her voice went up, ended in a little shrill screaming pitch.

"You've got to be a trouper, Rosa," he said kindly. "You've got to sing. You've got to tell yourself that you're in the wings, and it's your cue to go on, and you've got to sing."

There was a silence. Her hands were fists again, her body rigid. "Very well," she said in a whisper. "I'll sing."

Dead-white face of Samuel Golden on the sofa. Ghost of Samuel Golden in the person of Red Lacey. Stark figure of the girl, half covered by the shadows of the room. Only her eyes, alive in her face, and her mouth opened, and sounds came out. Low, sobbing, throbbing sounds in a deep contralto voice.

The sound filled the room, rose and fell.

"Eli—eli—"

Her eyes looking at her father's face. The grief and anguish in her heart rushing into her voice. Her hands lifting, up and up.

Lacey sat there, looking at her, spellbound. She was suddenly a thing of exquisite beauty; the living figure of tragedy. Tragedy singing a threnody. Tragedy hands uplifted to the heavens.

Her voice died away, a crooning minor tone. She sank down on the

floor, covered her face with her hands.

Lacey said in a husky whisper, "God, what a voice!"

Then the men came in the door and carried out Samuel Golden. Carried him away in the darkness.

## CHAPTER III

### EAST SIDE HERO



RED LACEY sat behind the counter of Samuel Golden's notion store. The black skull-cap was on his head. The half light touched him. The girl Rosa moved about through the store. Now and then she looked at Lacey's face, at the bread and

the cap and the black alpaca coat, and a strange, half-frightened, half-unbelieving light filled her eyes.

It had been like this for four days. Lacey, playing the part of Samuel Golden. Never leaving the store. Rosa, preparing his meals, acting her part in the grim little drama.

Waiting for the men to come back. The men who had crashed a black-jack off the jaw of Samuel Golden; killed him. One man—with a gold tooth.

Hours, like slow moving eternities. Hours filled with suspense; with tingling nerves. Hours waiting, watching that front door.

Under the counter, close to Lacey's hand was a submachine-gun and a .25 automatic.

When customers came into the store, he carried out the part of Samuel Golden. His stooped form stood erect. He smiled under his beard. And the girl was a thoroughbred. She sensed everything. She came running into the store to greet neighbor customers. She talked to them. She laughed. She sang. And she watched the front door.

Traffic moved endlessly through Fallon Street. The rumble of heavy wheels shook the building. The beat beat down mercilessly. Across the

street, Willie Quirk lounged in his uniform. Now and then he went into a store, now and then he went from one end of the block to the other. There was a police whistle in his pocket. He had explicit directions on how and when to use that whistle. He played his part so well he nearly effaced himself. Certainly no one gave him a second look.

And then, on the afternoon of the fourth day the girl Rosa was in the back of the store, singing. Singing one of those deep-toned, crooning things that made the heart liquid, and her voice broke jaggedly in the middle of a strain. She stood, staring at the door.

The little bell over the door had jangled. The men had entered.

Lacey hardly turned his head. He looked at the girl's face. It was enough. He knew the visitors he awaited had arrived. He got out of his seat slowly, his hands resting on the counter.

A MAN in a white suit, panama hat, orchid silk shirt, white sport shoes and a diamond ring, bellied up to the counter.

"Hi, Sam!" he said. There was a wicked glint in his eyes. The grin grew broader as he looked at the ugly purple bruise Lacey had duplicated on his own face.

"How's the jaw?" he asked. "What? It didn't bust? Cripes, for an old guy you can take it!"

The second man was a rat-faced little punk with pin-point irises and twitching hands. He mirrored the grin on the face of his companion. Now and then he glanced through the window, at the street. He was restless, almost itching. He was overdressed. His face was sallow, unhealthy-looking. The mark of the drug addict was on him.

Lacey's voice shook a little. "What do you want?" he said in an old man's tones.

The heavier of the two laughed loudly, and poked the hophead in the ribs with an elbow.

"What do we want?" he mocked. "How do you like that? He don't know what we want!" He whirled

suddenly, stuck his face close to Lacey's. "Listen, you punk!" he snarled. "We're through playin' with you, get it! From now on things are going to get tough—beginning right now!"

"We figured that maybe that little rap on the teeth with a sap would wake you up to the fact that we ain't playing bean bag. You get the dough on the line and be glad you're getting off at bargain rates! Twenty bucks a week is the price. And come up with it—be wise—save yourself grief."

"Twenty dollars?" moaned Lacey in a quavering voice. "Where should I get twenty dollars? I don't make twenty dollars hardly in a week! Besides, I don't want to belong to no 'Business Man's Protective Association,' or whatever it is. I don't need it, positively. Nothing is happening in this store. In ten years, already, nothing happens." His voice trailed away.

"You mean *up to now!*" laughed the spokesman with a grating sadism in his voice. "Now look, we're talking business and you may as well get used to it. From now on I'm the guy who will make the collections, see? I collect the membership fees. Sure, *every* Friday, like clockwork, I'll be around. And you better be ready for me, see? We don't carry no delinquent customers. We leave that job to the hurry-up wagon from Bellevue. Now kick through with this week's dues. I don't want no trouble with you."

Lacey's voice was the same stubborn monotone. "I haven't got twenty dollars. I won't pay. Why don't you go away? I don't want to belong. I told you."

The man in the white linen suit shrugged and looked at his rat-faced pal. "Well, I guess we may as well start?" he said meaningly.

The dopehead had a voice like a rat. "Sure," he squeaked. "Might as well start."

The man in the white suit made a sudden lunge forward. His hand grabbed for the beard in front of him to pull the bearded face toward him. A sap leaped out from under

the sleeve of his coat. A sap, with the loop around his wrist.

"This time you get it right!" he grunted.

And suddenly the bearded face in front of him glided out of reach. And at the same instant, a white, shaking hand came up from under the counter, and the hand caressed a .25 automatic.

"Why, you greasy-looking louse!" screamed the man in the white suit. "You got a rod, huh? A little pop-gun? Where in the hell do you get off, being so brave all of a sudden? Just for that I'm going to break your arm. Put that lousy rod down!"

HE was suddenly looking at the glinting lights in the eyes over the beard, eyes staring out from under the white bushy brows of an old man. But they were not old man's eyes. He took a step back.

The girl, Rosa, stood, unmoving, her hand resting on her heart.

The black sap, ugly, dangerous-looking, was still clutched in the beefy hand of the gorilla in the white suit.

"Be so kindly," said Lacey's voice, imitating the voice of Samuel Golden as Rosa had described it to him, "to step across the store—face to the wall."

The rat-faced punk made a sudden dive for a shoulder holster. There was a cracking sound like a dry stick breaking. The expression on the rat-like face changed; stared. A crimson blotch spread over the fellow's shoulder, ran into the texture of the sport coat he wore, dripped down the sleeve.

"Against the wall, kindly," said Lacey. "I don't like shooting—"

"Why, you sap! You can't get away with something like this!" cursed the man in the white suit. "The mob will come in here and take this place apart. They'll murder you!"

"Against the wall—kindly!" urged Lacey's quiet voice.

The man in the white suit turned abruptly, faced the wall, walked forward.

"He plugged me!" Ratface mum-

bled through white, trembling lips. "The damned old mug plugged me!" There was a whimper in the voice.

"Shut your trap," snarled the man in the white suit. "We'll take care of this guy! He's nuts—raving!"

They stood there, face to the wall, hand half lifted.

A gentle hand ran over their persons. The same gentle hand took a belly gun from the bird in the white suit, tossed it behind the counter. Just as gently it removed the ugly-looking sap from around the right wrist.

"So you're coming every Friday to collect, is it?" said the gentle voice. "Every Friday I should pay twenty good dollars to a gang of chiselers like you, which go around hitting honest people with blackjacks? Well, I wouldn't pay it."

"You'll pay it!" snarled the voice of the man in the white suit.

The old man's hand balanced the sap reflectively. The old man's voice said: "Turn around."

The man in the white suit turned, his eyes swirling with hatred and rage.

The old man's white hand suddenly went up, the sap with it. It cracked down. The sap hit the man in the white suit across the mouth. There was a nasty grating, breaking sound as the sap broke teeth and mouth. Ratface shrieked, almost like a woman.

"So, my friend? How does it feel—to get hit across the mouth?"

The sap went up again. It smashed down a second time. Across the bridge of the nose of the man in the white suit. There was a sickening, crunching sound. The nose collapsed, became a pulp, a terrible-looking thing. Blood spurted on the floor.

Quite calmly Lacey looked at the rat-faced dopehead. He took a step forward.

"Don't!" screeched Ratface. "Don't!"

The sap fell. It ruined the ratface. It fell again, this time on the collarbone. There was a breaking sound.

"So, on Fridays you'll come?"

asked Lacey's voice calmly. "So, on Fridays I'll be waiting—like this. Only it won't be Friday for you, *gonifs*, not for a lot of Fridays."

The door opened. A blue uniform filled the doorway. The cop on the beat walked into the store. He was grinning a little, a tight, white grin. The grin got a little sick-looking as he looked at the two faces in front of Lacey.

"A couple of customers, Mr. Mulligan," said Lacey in Samuel Golden's voice. "Good customers too! A little damaged, maybe, but good. Maybe you'll take them with you?"

"Leave 'em to me," promised Officer Mulligan. "I was just passin'." He winked. "It'll gimme something to occupy me mind."

He grabbed the half dead gorillas by an arm each. The white linen suit on the bigger gorilla was blood-soaked, ruined.

"Come on!" said Mulligan gruffly. "Let's go for a ride."

"Maybe, when you get a chance to talk to these boys they could tell you something about who sent 'em—maybe?"

"They'll sing," promised Mulligan, "when the boys downtown start askin' the questions!" He dragged the two men out with him.

The girl Rosa, her eyes wide, stared at Lacey's face, the face which looked so much like the face of her own father. A face with swirling grey-steel-green eyes crowded with the lust of battle.

**A**CROSS the street, Willie Quirk, almost dancing in excitement, but still acting the part of the random messenger boy, followed the cop and the two ruined mobsmen.

"It was terrible," said the girl's deep voice.

"It was a cinch!" grinned Lacey under the beard. "But it's only the beginning. They'll be back."

"Only the little fellow was here before. The one with the thin face and funny eyes. The other man I didn't recognize. Before, it was a man with a gold tooth, a big man."

The sidewalk outside the store was milling with excitement. Shirt-

sleeved men and perspiring women shoved and pushed to peer through the windows into the Golden store. Chattering voices and excited yelpings filled the street, drowned out the noises of the traffic.

Men rushed into the store, shook hands in emotional hysteria with the man they believed to be Samuel Golden. Women wept and screeched and looked frightened.

After a while a horde of newspaper men descended on the scene. A hot story! Photo bulbs flared inside the store of Samuel Golden. Reporters shot questions.

At five o'clock the evening papers came through Fallon Street and Fallon Street grabbed them avidly. There was a big picture of Samuel Golden on the front page of the papers, and a big black headline.

#### COURAGEOUS STOREKEEPER BEATS UP GANGSTERS

The caption under the picture stated:

**Meek Storekeeper Half Kills Two  
Thug Extortionists!**

There were pictures of the two thugs. They did look half killed. Features swollen. Eyes closed to slits. Mouths crushed out of shape. Pictures taken in the precinct station by grinning reporters.

The running story with the photos said:

Believe it or not, but a stooped, kindly-eyed, bearded little man, sere with the years which have sprinkled snow upon his head, today defended the sanctity of his home and business so well that he handed out a terrific beating to two habitual "tough guys." The tough guys have police records as long as the beard of Samuel Golden who vanquished them.

Reporters, viewing the remains of the two "muscle men" who attempted to levy tribute on Golden, found it difficult to believe that a sixty-five-year-old man, slight to the point of self-effacement, modest as a whisper, looking belligerent as the proverbial lamb, could so manhandle twice his weight in hoodlums. But there is no doubt of what occurred in the little "notions store" of Samuel Golden this afternoon.

The two racketeers representing a "Merchants Protective Association," demanded tribute from Golden on threats of physical violence to his person and injury to his



property. The "lamb" swung into action, took from the two "hoods" the artillery they carried for "self-protection," and worked them over to the queen's taste!

Officer Mulligan, cop on the beat which includes Fallon and Orchid Streets, entered the store after the smoke of battle had cleared away and half carried the two semi-conscious "tough guys" to the nearest police call box.

All in all Samuel Golden wrote himself a one-man Declaration of Independence from the vicious extortion racket and racketeering which has Fallon Street and its environs by the throat. A few more fighters like Samuel Golden would make racketeering impossible.

Fallon Street read the story. Fallon Street looked at the picture of Samuel Golden on the front page, and at the picture of Big Mike Cleary and Tony Piazzini, whom the police had identified as the "collectors" for the "Merchants Protective Association."

Fallon Street looked at Samuel Golden in the flesh and was a bit dazed by it all. But Fallon Street crowded the Golden store to pay tribute to its hero; a modest hero who contented himself with waving gentle protests, with smiling a little and permitting Rosa Golden to do all the talking.

## CHAPTER IV

### TOMMY-GUN PARTY



R. HERBERT SLOCUM MOORE paced the thick Chinese rug which covered the floor of his private office. He clutched a late afternoon edition of the *News-Telegram* in his right hand. His left hand was jammed into the

pockets of his tailored trousers.

His thin, strangely white face was cold as ice and his black eyes swirled with anger. There was a suggestion of cruelty about the exquisitely molded features of Mr. Moore. The nose, a trifle too thin and mobile, suggested the wolf. The thin, almost colorless mouth added to the illusion. The manner in which he wore his hair, sleek, drawn sharply back from

his forehead added to the animal likeness.

The expensive materials and tailoring of the lounge suit he wore did nothing to dispel the illusion. Neither did the gardenia in his buttonhole.

In a chair, set beside a massive rosewood desk, sat a florid-faced man with a gold incisor. Little blue veins ran about the man's nose. He had a massive head, slightly bald, with greying sandy hair. His mouth was large-lipped. His teeth were clamped down on a cigar. He chewed at the cigar. There was a worried, almost furtive look in his bloodshot grey eyes. His hands were soft and white, pudgy with good living, and he wore a three-carat diamond on the third finger of his left hand.

His clothing was almost as expensively fashioned as Moore's. He was uncomfortable. There was the suggestion of invisible perspiration about him. Now and then he squirmed in the chair as he looked at Moore's thin, white face.

At the end of the rug, Mr. Moore turned suddenly, faced the man with the gold tooth. His voice was cold, almost plaintive, but seething with a carefully controlled undercurrent of fury.

"The trouble with you, Angelo," said Mr. Moore to the gentleman beside the rosewood desk, "is that I can't trust you with the execution of even petty details."

"Aw, Mr. Moore!" protested Angelo. "The guy went raving nuts! He couldn't get away with a play like that again in a million years. He just kind of took Mike and Tony by surprise. Hell! They didn't expect that Golden mug to pull a rod on 'em! They figured after that sock on the jaw this Golden would be all softened up, like everybody else, and that it was just a business of walking in and making the collection. But the little goof must have gone nuts. To pull a stunt like that!"

"Look at this paper!" invited Moore coldly. "How do you think that will react on all of our—clients? Suppose they suddenly band themselves together, decide to—er—reign from the Merchant's Protective

Association, refuse to pay their—er—dues."

"Listen, Boss!" growled Angelo. "You lemme handle this business! I know how to take care of that Golden punk, and how to keep the rest of those babies in line. I'm going to make an example of this Golden. When I get finished with him he'll pay—if he's able. He'll run with the dough in his hand. And so will those other suckers down there in Fallon Street. If they have any fancy ideas, I'll put 'em to sleep—quick!"

Mr. Moore's eyes looked at Angelo. "I'm afraid—really, I am afraid, Angelo, that perhaps you are getting a little—how do you put it—soft? You don't stand prosperity well. You fail to take care of details properly. This Golden case proves it. I do all the work and all the planning, and take care of all the legal technicalities involved. You have only the simple execution of orders, and yet you involve the organization in something like this. Really, it's inexcusable!"

"It ain't nothin' but an accident, like I said, that can happen to anybody!" insisted Angelo. "I said I'd take care of that monkey—and I will. I'll show that guy!"

"And we had Fallon Street so well organized!" mourned Mr. Moore. "Everything going so smoothly, the dues are paid so promptly. Really, it is a crime to permit something like this to happen."

He threw the crumpled paper on top of the desk. His eyes were slits. His mouth drew away from his teeth a little. His teeth were white and small and sharp. His voice was still calm, still cold, but like the slashing of a wolf's fangs.

"I shall expect you to straighten this matter out," he said. "I am impatient with failures. I will not tolerate failures. I cannot personally take care of the little details connected with the running of this organization. If you don't take care of it properly, or if this affair assumes serious proportions, I am afraid I shall have to part company with you, Angelo."

It seemed that a little shudder ran up the spine of Angelo. He sat in the chair, his eyes fixed on the white, aristocratic face of Mr. Moore. Eyes, in which lurked a sudden fear, almost terror. Perspiration broke out in beads on his forehead. His hands opened and closed spasmodically.

"Aw, gee, Boss," he said huskily. "I—"

"That's all, Angelo," said Mr. Moore, and his voice was almost kindly. "You may go now. I'm expecting you to justify my confidence in you."

Angelo came up out of the chair. "You leave it to me," he growled. "I'll give that punk a dose of medicine that will make him well for the rest of his life."

He backed out of the office, bumping into a chair on the way, his hat still in his hand, the light of worry and fear still in his eyes.

He left Mr. Herbert Slocum Moore to the contemplation of a Corot landscape hanging on the wall of the exquisitely appointed office. A contemplation, made up of a frown, a snarling mouth and tightly clenched hands.

RED LACEY, still in the rôle of Samuel Golden, sat in the darkness of the store, near the window, looking out on Fallon Street. His eyes were closed, his body relaxed. The grey beard fell down upon his chest. The black skull-cap on his head completed a picture of repose.

From the living quarters behind the store the deep contralto voice of Rosa Golden crooned a Russian gypsy song. Crooned it with a passionate love for the music; crooned it, her throat and mouth seeming to caress each note. Now and then she moved across the doorway, became a silhouette against the yellow glow of light. Her body was tall and straight, her head carried proudly.

Now and then Lacey opened his eyes a little and looked at her. Now and then he shifted the position of the tommy gun lying across his knees.

Night had stilled Fallon Street.

The heavy rumble of wheeled traffic was gone. Only a random street car clanged and crashed its way over rails. Between the street cars there was silence. The pushcarts along the curbs were covered over against the night, and the merchants vanished. Even the children had disappeared. The footsteps of hurrying passers-by echoed hollowly from the buildings. The street lamps threw a fitful illumination.

THE only living thing in Fallon Street seemed to be that crooning voice of Rosa Golden. The quiet was heavy, oppressive, like the quiet before the unleashing of a summer thunder storm.

A black sedan rolled slowly through Fallon Street. It was showing parking lights only. It rolled around the corner, disappeared. Lacey glanced at it, followed it with his eyes.

A figure in o.d. serge, a messenger boy, flitted through the shadows, darted across the street, came to the door of the Golden store, entered. Willie Quirk's impish-looking face was touched for an instant by a street light. His face was tense, his eyes snapping.

"Get ready, Chief, that's them!" he said.

"You sure?" asked Lacey.

"Sure, a black car! Four guys in it. It's a cinch they were giving the joint a case the first time around! When they come back, it's the business."

Lacey's voice was like the crack of a whip lash.

"Okay, Willie! Beat it back across the street! You know what to do, and when. Keep out of the business! Get it? Out!"

"Aw, gee, Chief!" protested Willie.

"Scram!"

The o.d. serge uniform drifted back across the street, was swallowed up in the shadows.

Lacey strode into the living quarters behind the store. He carried the tommy gun in one hand. The round pan with its hundred rounds was slung over the gun. Rosa Golden

looked at him, her eyes wide. Her voice seemed swallowed by her throat.

"I don't want you to be frightened, Rosa," said Lacey. "I haven't but a minute to talk. They're coming. I want you to go out in the backyard. You won't be in any danger there. Go out and stay—until it's over. I think this will be the last visit." There was a terribly grim something in his voice and the steely depths of his eyes were swirling.

"I'm not afraid," the girl said in a steady voice. "If there is danger, I should share it. I should not let you—"

"Outside—in a hurry!" ordered Lacey. "Stay there." He almost pushed her by main strength out into the darkness of the backyard.

He put out the lights in the living quarters. He ran across the store in half a dozen steps, opened the door quietly, went out onto the sidewalk of Fallon Street. There were three galvanized iron ash cans on the sidewalk, near the curb. They were heavy and filled with ashes. They were arranged in a strange pattern. They had been there for four days. They formed a breastworks a dozen feet east of the entrance to the notions store of Samuel Golden.

Lacey crouched on his knees behind the cans. He held the tommy gun in his hands, the muzzle behind the top of the cans. He was breathing through set teeth. The silence was heavy, oppressive.

Then, at the west end of the block, the lights of a car swung into Fallon Street. It passed under the first street lamp. It was a black sedan, running with parking lights. It eased over to the south curb, running slowly. It ran more slowly as it drew abreast of the Golden store. Suddenly the windows of the car were rolled down and the machine came to a momentary halt. Three black objects flew out of the car, crashed through the plate glass window of the store.

The muzzle of an automatic sub-machine-gun was thrust out of the car. It began to vomit flame, to buck and jump with the recoil. The

chattering staccato filled the canyon of Fallon Street with a typhoon of noise. The most murderous noise in the world.

The interior of the Golden store seemed to erupt flame and concussion. The roar of three closely separated explosions shook the street. There was the sound of splintering and showering glass. Wood, blasted to splinters, flew through the air. Bits of bricks and stonework swirled madly, fell with a clatter.

A voice from the black sedan yelled: "Okay. Let's go! I'll bet that damn' mug kicks through now!"

The voice was answered by a laugh.

Behind the ash barrels, Lacey, a white grin on his face, rested the muzzle of his tommy gun on the top of a barrel. His finger crooked around the trigger. The engine in the car raced, roared. The car lurched forward. At that moment, Lacey squeezed the trigger of his gun.

The muzzle spat flame and destruction. The windshield of the black sedan disappeared. There were



momentary screams from within the car. The car rolled over the sidewalk, crashed into a wall, spilled over on its back, and above every other sound, was the terrible, rivet-hammerlike firing of Lacey's tommy gun.

After a minute the gun went dead in his hands, the ammunition expended, the gun white-hot. He knelt there looking at the wreck of the black sedan. Then he got to his feet, took his .25 automatic from his vest pocket, walked slowly toward the overturned car.

**A**CROSS the street, Willie Quirk blew one shrill blast on his police whistle.

At almost the same instant, a

squad car, with a submachine-gun operator, came around into Fallon Street, stopped with a squealing of brakes.

Lacey was standing over the wreck of the car, a queer, tense expression on his face. He watched while the cops pulled riddled bodies out of the car. Watched the expressions on the faces of the cops. He watched until the morgue wagon came up, until Fallon Street was in the midst of a seething excitement such as it had never known, with men and women, half dressed, thronging the street. Men and women looking at the explosion-gutted remains of Samuel Golden's store, and at the bearded face of Samuel Golden who stood with a tommy gun in his hands.

"Be careful of that mug with the gold tooth!" whispered Lacey. "He was in the back seat, and I tried not to hurt him much. I want to talk to that guy later. Take good care of him and save him. He belongs to me."

The sergeant on the detail nodded. The morgue wagon pulled away.

Lacey went into the ruins of the store, into the backyard. He found Rosa Golden standing there, her face white, a little trickle of blood running from her cheek where a splinter had scratched her.

"Is it all over?" she asked tonelessly.

Lacey looked at her face. "It's all over!" he said. "I've got a little mopping up to do—but that gang is going to leave Fallon Street alone from now on."

Suddenly she seemed to collapse. He put his arm around her, the arm holding the tommy gun. He held her, with the wreckage of everything her life had been, tumbled and heaped about her in ghastly debris.

Willie Quirk was standing in the shadows of the ruined building.

"Look, Willie!" growled Lacey. "Take care of Miss Golden here. Stay with her till I come back. I won't be long."

Then the stooped figure, still in the likeness of Samuel Golden, made its way through the blackened ruins of the little store and disappeared

## CHAPTER V

## FALLON STREET TRIUMPH



**I**NSPECTOR WILLIAM JOHNSON of the Homicide Squad threw open the door of the little room and kicked a bloody, snarling figure inside. A gold tooth was prominent in the mouth of the bloody face.

The little room was without windows. When the door was closed it was like a cell. The walls were a dead white. There was one chair in the room. A plain, wooden kitchen chair. The floor was concrete. The walls were thick and sound proof. There was a tripod in one corner of the room, a tripod with a brilliant reflector, and a two-thousand-watt lamp.

Johnson looked at the man. He grinned.

"You look like hell, Angelo," he said, almost cheerfully. "But don't let that worry you. You're going to look a lot worse."

There was a muffled knock on the door. Johnson crossed the room, threw the door open. Four men came inside. They were big men, with huge shoulders. Two hundred pounders. They were in sweat-shirts and gym pants. They were grinning. Grinning, with icy eyes. They looked at the man. They looked at Johnson. Suddenly the atmosphere within the room became grim, taut.

"I called you boys in because I want you to meet Angelo—Angelo Vittori," said Johnson pleasantly. "Maybe you boys have met Angelo before. He's a big shot. Yes, sir, a big shot, boys. Angelo is in the gouge racket. He runs a 'Merchant's Protective Association' over Fallon Street way. Does his collecting with pineapples and tommy guns—and blackjacks. Don't you, Angelo?"

There was an ugly, glinting light in Johnson's eyes. There was a silence. Angelo Vittori sat in the middle of the room on the kitchen chair.

"Why the hell don't you go to work, and cut out the gags?" he snarled. "You might as well get in your licks now. I'll be sprung out of this rat trap as soon as my mouthpiece gets the news. Until then—amuse yourselves. I can take it."

"Didn't I tell you he was a big shot?" nodded Johnson to the sweat-shirted detectives.

The four men grinned mirthlessly, and their hands opened and closed spasmodically. They looked at Johnson for the cue.

"Angelo and his partners went drumming up business tonight. They threw the works into a little store on Fallon Street—pineapple and tommy-gun business from the street. Only something happened. It's all so strange. Just when they were ready to roll away in a nice new Caddy a tommy gun picks 'em up, and Angelo, here, is the only survivor. Isn't he lucky?"

Those terrible, mirthless grins were turned on Angelo Vittori. He sat there, his mouth snarling, sweat running down over his eyes from his scalp, mixing with the smear of blood on his face.

"Who's your boss, Angelo?" asked Johnson suddenly in a low whisper.

"Go to hell!"

"Come on, who's your boss?" insisted Johnson. "You can save yourself a lot of grief by playing this straight."

"You heard me."

A sweat-shirted sleeve suddenly swung. There was the crack of knuckles across Vittori's mouth. Blood spurted from under the knuckles.

"Say sir to the inspector, you cheap punk!" growled a voice, "or I'll feed you your own teeth."

Vittori's tongue lapped up the blood on his mouth. His eyes swirled as he looked at the detective.

"Big brave guy!" he sneered.

"See how brave you'll be in the hot squat," said Johnson sweetly.

Under the blood and hate Vittori's face was suddenly white. His eyes glistened.

"Where the hell do you guys get

that hot squat stuff?" he said in the same sneering voice. But there was a brittleness mixed with the fear, and fear crawled in his eyes.

"Why, don't you know? They still fry gorillas in this state for murder," said Johnson in a patient voice.

"You guys must think you've got an amateur!" snarled Vittori. "What d'ya mean—murder? You can't frame me. I ain't bumped nobody off. And I'll beat this other rap the minute I get sprung. I got connections, you mugs—"

"He's got connections!" said Johnson in a reverent whisper for the benefit of the four sweat-shirted detectives. "Connections."

He looked down at Vittori's face. "Now, that's interesting!" he said. "Who are the connections, Angelo?"

"Big enough to tear that tin badge off you and send you back to flat-footing it in the sticks."

"Important people, eh?"

"Whadda you think?"

"Oh, I admit it!" nodded Johnson. "You'd have to have connections. Somebody with brains—to tell you what to do."

"Yeah? Well, lemme tell you this—"

There was another crack of knuckles on teeth. "Speak when you are spoken to, hood!" said the husky voice.

"So you think you're not going to fry, eh?" said Johnson.

"You said it. I can beat any sour rap you guys can frame up."

"And you don't want to tell me who your boss is?"

"Don't be silly."

JOHNSON looked at him for a minute. He looked at the men in the room with him. After a moment he said, and he was still smiling, "Bring in Mr. Golden—to identify him, Mike."

A sweat-shirted figure went to the door, opened it, went out. He returned in a minute, and with him came the counterpart of Samuel Golden. The lights went down in the room; only the cruel white light beat on the face of Angelo Vittori.

"Mr. Golden," said Johnson, "look

at this man closely. Ever see him before?"

"Cut out the comedy!" growled Vittori. "I'll answer. Sure he saw me! He's Sam Golden. He runs that store on Fallon Street."

"That's right, isn't it, Mr. Golden?" asked Johnson quietly.

The mouth under the beard moved. An old man's voice, nervous, answered.

"It's right, Mr. Johnson. He's coming to my store to make me join a Merchant's Union which I am not wanting to join. He's asking me twenty dollars a week—dues, he's calling it. I'm refusing to pay. I don't make so much. So, he hits Sam Golden, an old man, with a blackjack which he is carrying up his sleeve."

Johnson's eyes were looking at Angelo Vittori. His mouth was smiling but the eyes were deadly.

"And you're not going to burn?" he asked in the same soft voice.

"Listen, what is this? Where do you get that 'burn' stuff?" Vittori's eyes were scornful.

"Well, anyhow, you hit him with a sap, is that it?" There was sudden quiet in the room. "You hit Sam Golden, an old man, with a sap because he wouldn't pay dues to your Merchant's Protective Association."

"So I hit him with a sap. So what? So make something of it!" growled Angelo. "I'll beat that rap too. And that *fry* stuff don't kid me. I ain't killed nobody. I don't never kill nobody. Only chumps go round bumpin' guys off. I'm no chump. Sure I hit Golden a little love tap to soften him up. But that ain't killin'. And I'll be out of here in two hours."

The men in the room took a long breath. They smiled a little more. They looked at Vittori.

"So you hit Samuel Golden with a blackjack, because he wouldn't pay dues in the Merchant's Protective Association?" Johnson seemed to caress the words as they came out of his mouth.

"You can hear, can't you?" snarled Angelo. "And so what?"

The old man's hands went up to his head. Very slowly. His eyes were fixed on Angelo Vittori's face. The hands took off the skull-cap—deliberately; tossed the black object into Vittori's lap. Then, just as slowly, the same hands manipulated an old man's wig, took it off, almost like scalping himself, revealing close-cropped, brick-red hair under the wig.

And little by little, the hands worked at the spirit gum and the beard came away from the jaws. The beard followed the skull-cap and the wig onto Vittori's knees.

VITTORI sat there, his face ghastly, staring. His throat worked. His eyes stared.

As a last gesture, the cunningly contrived lines were wiped off the "old man's" face on the back of a sweat-shirt. And Red Lacey stood in the room, still dressed in Samuel Golden's threadbare pants and alpaca coat—but Red Lacey.

"Remember me, Vittori?" asked Lacey's voice coldly. "The name is Lacey."

There was a hoarse cry in Vittori's voice. "Hey, what the hell is this? What the hell is this guy going around dressed like Golden for? What's the angle?"

"Did you say you weren't going to fry, Angelo?" asked Johnson in a

voice that suddenly held a chill, an icy chill. "Did you say you'd beat the rap? Did you say you hit Golden on the jaw with a sap, but that was not killing?"

"Sure, I said it!" There was a little shriek in the voice.

"You're wrong as hell, Angelo," said Johnson. "It was murder. He was dead when you were running out of the store after you conked him with the blackjack. He was an old man—you killed him."

Vittori's hands clutched at the air. "It's a lie! A plant, damn it! The boys see him in the store after that. Don't he half kill Tony and Big Mike Cleary when they go around to collect? Don't he get his mug in the papers?"

"What? An old man like Sam Golden beating up two tough guys like Mike and Tony?" chided Johnson. "Angelo! When brains were passed out you didn't hear the dinner bell. The gentleman who gave Mike and Tony the rocking and socking was Mr. Lacey here. All dressed up like Sam Golden. Sure, using you guys as suckers. Making you come back and dig your own graves; wiping you out. The whole mangy, squealing pack of you. Spilling your blood on the same street where you spilled Sam Golden's. He got you all—all but you—and your boss. He

[Turn Page]

## YOU DON'T NEED A "RICH UNCLE"!

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saved you two—for something better. For the hot squat."

Suddenly Angelo Vittori collapsed in the chair. His eyes stared down at the skull-cap and the beard and the wig.

"You—guys—wouldn't kid me about something like this, would you?" he whimpered.

"Naw, we wouldn't kid you, Angelo," nodded Johnson. "It's on the level. Sam Golden is dead. You killed him."

"And in my neighborhood—almost on my own corner!" snarled Lacey. "I ought to go to work on you, just for the exercise."

"And so you're going to burn. And your boss, who got the important dough from the racket, is going to—"

"Like hell he is!" screamed Vittori. His face was purple, his eyes staring.

"Let's see that rat squirm, too! I took enough of his lip, and the phony scent, and the fishy stare. Sure, he was going to put me on the spot—have me taken care of if I didn't handle this Golden business. Sure, he told me that today. Well, he ain't going to sit in that picture gallery and eat off gold plates and look at guys as if they were worms while I fry! To hell with him!"

"Ah," sighed Johnson. "Now we are getting somewhere."

"Go get him!" screamed Vittori. "Bring him down here. Throw him in a lousy cell. See how that fits his Park Avenue clothes and his Harvard line of talk. Let him lay on the cement and feel the lice crawl over him. Who the hell is he, anyway?"

"Yeah," whispered Johnson. "Who is he?"

"Moore!" spat Vittori venomously. "Mr. Herbert Slocum Moore, of the Park Avenue Moores. He's the front for this mob. It's his racket. Us guys got nickels. He got the dough."

"Moore?" echoed Lacey. "Moore, the big shot lawyer? Ten grand retaining fees?"

"Moore?" marveled Johnson. "The chairman of the board of the Borland Bank?"

"Moore?" echoed the four sweat-shirted detectives. They ran tongues over mouths.

"Gardenias. Striped pants. Silk hat. Box at the opera. Nothing less than the Supreme Court for him. Moore!" Lacey's voice was grating.

"You're not a liar, are you, Angelo?" asked Johnson softly.

"Naw, I ain't a liar. Get him! Bring him down here. I got the proof. You guys will be able to fry two eggs!" He laughed wildly, a cackle.

"He isn't lying!" said Lacey grimly. "I've heard things about this guy Moore. Put 'em away for future reference. What are we waiting for?"

"Put him away, boys!" said Johnson to the sweat-shirted detectives, with a nod toward Vittori. "Mr. Lacey and I have a date uptown. Park Avenue."

**MR. HERBERT SLOCUM** MOORE'S butler parted the curtains to the drawing room of the magnificent apartment and announced with great dignity:

"Inspector William Johnson and Mr. Richard Lacey, sir."

Mr. Moore smiled, got up from behind a great walnut desk, bowed at the hips.

"Please come in, gentlemen," he said. "I—er—apologize for being in dressing gown, but after all it is an ungodly hour in the morning to get a man out of bed. But anything to aid the police."

Johnson looked at him. At the sleek hair, and the gold and black dressing gown, at the richness of the room, and the wolflike features of Herbert Slocum Moore.

"May I offer you gentlemen your first cigar of the day?" smiled Moore. He lifted a walnut box that matched the desk, opened the lid, held it toward Lacey and Johnson.

"No, thanks!" said Johnson gruffly.

"Don't use them," said Lacey. He was watching Moore's eyes.

Moore sank down in a chair behind the desk. "And now, Inspector, 'what's on the mind of the police force so early in the morning?'"

"I am here to arrest you as an accessory before the fact of murder, committed upon the person of Samuel Golden." Johnson's voice droned ominously within the dead stillness of the apartment.

Moore drew a long breath. "It's rather early to play jokes, isn't it?" he demanded. "Really, it's a little out of taste."

He reached for a cigar, his hand stopping halfway across the desk.

"It's no joke, Moore," snapped Johnson. "We've got Angelo Vit-

Herbert Slocum Moore stood in front of his desk, the automatic in his hand half raised. There was a look of polite surprise on his face. Then his mouth sagged open and his eyes glazed, and he fell forward, his head smashing inertly against the heavy top of the walnut desk.

Johnson was across the room in three strides. He looked at Moore, and then he looked up at Red Lacey.

"Damn it!" he beefed at Lacey. "Don't you ever mess with that lousy popgun you carry? He's through."



## The SAINT RETURNS

to  
POPULAR DETECTIVE  
in

### *The Saint's Progress*

*A Complete Mystery Novel Featuring  
the World's Greatest  
Outlaw-Sleuth*

**By LESLIE CHARTERIS**

World-Famed Originator of THE SAINT

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

tori. He killed Golden with a blackjack, days ago. He spilled everything. He wants to have you in the next cell downtown and in the death house."

"Vittori?" said Moore blankly. "Vittori? Really—"

His hand reached in the cigar box. Then he leaped from the chair. There was the glint of indirect light on the vicious blackness of gun-metal.

Johnson's voice yelled: "Duck! He's got a gat!"

There was the sound of a breaking stick in the room. It sounded twice—that, and the smell of burning powder.

He picked up the phone, dialed Police Headquarters.

Lacey's eyes were looking around the room, at the rich paintings and tapestries. His eyes were swirling.

"And he got this stuff out of the sweat and blood and misery of Fallon Street," he growled in his throat. "It's too bad he won't make the trip with Angelo."

The two of them waited until the wrecking crew came up from Headquarters.

ON the great stage the lights were low, except a spot which touched the rapt face of the girl who sang. Below, in the orchestra

pit, a muted violin played an obli-gato and accompaniment, above the hushed ensemble of the orchestra.

IN the first row Red Lacey, in dinner jacket, sat beside Willie Quirk, his eyes staring at the face of the girl who sang, at her half closed eyes, listening to that warm voice which came out of her soul, listening to the supplication which seemed going up out of the great theater, up to Heaven itself.

"*Ell—Elliiiiii—*"

Rosa Golden, on stage before two thousand people, singing her heart out, tears rolling down her cheeks. Singing as she sang once in a little notions store on Fallon Street. Rosa Golden, in jet black, her black hair falling down over her shoulders in a glorious cascade.

The voice came to a murmuring stop. There was a long instant of silence in the theater with the two thousand sitting, almost trancelike. Then a tumult of applause; a thundering ovation.

And she stood, white, the tears still rolling down her face, trying to smile, trying to thank the two thousand.

"She's a riot," Willie Quirk said

in an awed voice. "She's great! Gee, from Fallon Street to here—that's something!"

"I made it," said Lacey queerly. His eyes were looking at the girl's face, his eyes just a little wet. "It's a long, long journey—and the fare is plenty."

"Remember that day in the car, going through Fallon Street, I told you dreams were born there—dreams—" Lacey's voice trailed away.

"Sure."

"Well, look up there—you'll see what I mean. A little fellow with a black skull-cap and a beard dreamed this dream and gave it to his daughter. So the little fellow's dream came true—only he isn't here tonight. I guess that was part of the fare."

"Ah, it only cost a nickel to get uptown from Fallon and Orchid!" said Willie vaguely.

"A nickel and pain and blood and misery and hunger."

He looked at Willie for a moment, and suddenly hugged him with one arm.

"Okay. Let's go!" he grinned. "You've had enough of the high-brow environment for tonight. I've got to feed it to you in small doses."

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

## DARK PASSPORT

*A Waterfront Mystery Novelette by JOHN HAWKINS*



*You start off  
with 2 strikes*

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**PROBAK JUNIOR**

Steve Lake Slides Out of Favor on Hot Ice—But Cool Thinking Lays a Trap for a Killer!



The gun belched redly to drive a slug into the floor

# What! No Imagination?

By FREDERICK C. PAINTON

Author of "Hot Dough," "Brute Kill," etc.

STEVE LAKE stood in the echoing corridor of police headquarters in Centre Street and stared glumly at the door through which he must presently enter. It was a simple, old-fashioned door, half of wood, half of frosted glass. And on the glass in gold leaf lettering was printed, INSPECTOR RIORDAN. Steve Lake had to go through that door.

Standing here, he was a detective

third-grade in the Jewelry Squad. But after he went in there he would be a patrolman, a flatfoot assigned to some precinct in the Bronx where he could break his arthes on a long beat. In short, they were going to bust Steve Lake.

If he had deserved this break, he could have pushed his chin out and gone in to take his medicine. But to be broken to a harness bull simply because older policemen in the de-

partment were jealous of his quick promotion aroused his anger at injustice.

Was it his fault that he chased three bandits escaping from a drug store stick-up, and shot it out with them, killing one and wounding the other two, after he himself had been shot down? Was it his fault that Commissioner Harkness, anxious for favorable publicity had publicly commended him, and then announced that patrolmen of such courage should be rewarded, and promoted him to detective third-grade?

He took a deep breath, got a new bite on his gum. Standing there, thinking, wasn't going to help. He had been put on the Dewarr stick-up because the guys that hated him knew he couldn't break the case. And he hadn't. It didn't matter that the Dewarr holdup was a perfect job, without a clue, that Einstein himself couldn't solve it. He had flopped, and he'd have to pay the price of failure.

Someone calling his name broke his reflections.

"Hey, Lake, telephone for you."

HE couldn't imagine anything important coming over the phone, but he seized on the interruption to postpone his appearance before Inspector Riordan. He hastened back to the Jewelry Bureau.

The two older dicks ignored him except to nod coldly to the phone. Lake picked up the receiver, said, "Hello."

"Lissen, Lake," came a rasping, nervous voice, "this is Gimpy Martin. Watchu willin' to pay for a hot tip on the Dewarr stickup?"

Gimpy Martin was a fink, a stool-pigeon. He had also been what is called a punk, or a gang hanger-on. Every New York dick cultivates and builds up his own sources of information through stool-pigeons. And Lake had caught Gimpy trying to push in an East Side cut-rate jewelry store. He held this charge over Gimpy, and bought occasional hot underworld tips from Gimpy at ten dollars a tip. He was reliable.

Lake's face grew taut—a lead at

last. He might still break the Dewarr case and stave off the loss of his shield.

He said, "I'll pay plenty. What have you got?"

"Bring fifty bucks around to the Barkley Hotel," said Gimpy cunningly, "and I'll belch an earful."

The line clicked and went dead. Lake put the receiver back on the cradle.

Old Pieter Van Hoosen who had been a cop when Steve wore diapers, growled gruffly, "Inspector Riordan just called and says for you to hop in and make it snappy."

Lake smiled. "If you boys are waiting around for the funeral, you may have a long wait." He strode briskly into Inspector Riordan's office.

"Hello, Chief," he forced a smile. "Detective Lake reporting."

"You mean Patrolman Lake reporting," corrected Inspector Riordan. He was a big leathery man with a square face, a square jaw and hard, disillusioned eyes.

"Now, wait a minute, Inspector," Lake began, and told him of the new development, withholding only Gimpy's name as was customary.

"With this lead," Lake concluded, "I think I can bust this case wide open."

"Maybe you could," Inspector Riordan's expression did not change, "only it's been busted wide open. It's settled. The diamonds have been returned."

"What!" Lake was staggered.

"Don't you read the papers?" Riordan held up a noon edition of the *Sphere*. In black headlines across eight columns it read:

#### DEWARR DIAMONDS RECOVERED

And in lesser type:

Asah Stone, famous private detective, returns one hundred thousand dollars in gems to Dewarrs after police fail to break case.

Lake's eyes sped down the thick blocks of grey printing, and he was sick at what he read. It was Asah Stone this, and Asah Stone that; the renowned private detective, the brilliant private sleuth who had suc-

ceeded where the police had failed.

But when you got rid of all the compliments and the literary efforts of a reporter trying to pad out a story, it summed down to this: that Asah Stone, by means which he had not revealed, had recovered the hundred thousand dollars in diamonds stolen from Mrs. Jonathan Dewarr when she had been held up in her suite at the Hotel Superbe a fortnight ago.

There was something else, too, that Steve read with a sick heart. Set two columns wide in bold black type was a short editorial boxed at the top of the page, entitled:

#### WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE POLICE?

It said a lot of bitter, terrible things about inefficiency, hinted at graft and corruption, and political stupidity, and wound up by saying:

Has it come to this in our city, that a private detective can succeed where eighteen thousand policemen fail? Is Asah Stone more brilliant than our two thousand detectives—OR IS HE MORE HONEST?

"Wow!" muttered Lake. He knew that the *Sphere* was against the present police commissioner, but this was the boldest, most vicious attack yet made.

"Wow is right," growled Riordan. "The first thing Harkness did was to call me and have you suspended on charges of inefficiency. And that's where you are now."

"The goat," said Lake bitterly, "sent to join the other goats in the Bronx."

"It's worse than that, lad," said Riordan. "You'll probably be dismissed from the force. Harkness is in a spot and somebody has to take the fall."

Lake recoiled. His anger flushed his face red.

"But they passed up older men to stick me on this case because they wanted to see me busted," he yelled. "They wanted to reduce me because older men were jealous."

"That's department politics," Riordan said coldly. "You laid an egg on this case, and you pay." He held out his hand. "I'll take your shield,"

Slowly Lake unpinned the shining shield. How proud he had been of it. Blowing on it to polish off the moisture, proud of it, looking upon it as a symbol of high duty. Riordan took the bit of metal and flipped it into the drawer. He sat silent, indicating that the interview was over.

Lake said suddenly, "Well, if Asah Stone recovered the diamonds, where is the pinch? Who did he turn over for the job?"

RIORDAN stared disgustedly. "He didn't pinch anybody. He just made a deal with the thieves and got back the jewels." He snorted.

"How dumb are you anyway? You know Asah Stone is retained by most of the big insurance companies. Those diamonds were insured for a hundred thousand dollars. If Asah Stone can make contact with the thieves and offer them fifty grand, no questions asked, they take it. Mrs. Dewarr gets back her diamonds. The thieves get an easy fifty grand, and the insurance company saves fifty thousand dollars."

"But that's compounding a felony," protested Lake. "That's just urging these bandits to go ahead and keep on knocking off rich dames who wear too many jewels. Maybe that accounts for the sixteen big jewel stickups in the past year."

Riordan twisted impatiently. "The trouble with you, Steve, is that you haven't got any imagination. You can't figure beyond cause and effect. That's why I'm satisfied you'll never make a detective—beat it now, I'm busy."

The bright sunshine on Centre Street seemed pale and weak as Steve Lake stumbled to the curb. Mechanically he tossed away his gum, unwrapped another stick, folded it and put it in his mouth. The first shock had passed, his fury was under control.

"What's imagination got to do with being a dick?" he muttered.

Suddenly his teeth clicked. He waved down a cab. "Fulton and Broadway," he growled and sank back against the cushions. He didn't move all during the trip. At the

corner of Fulton and Broadway he climbed two flights of stairs, and entered an office whose door bore the sign:

ASAH STONE  
Private Investigator

To the girl at the desk he said, "Hi, sweetheart, is the man marvel in?"

She went on smearing lipstick with the tip of her right little finger.

"He just came in. I don't know whether he sees dicks with broken arches. I'm not your sweetheart."

Lake grinned, "Right, you belong to the world." He pressed on, before she could reply, to the door marked "Private." He opened without knocking, but evidently the girl had pressed a buzzer, for Asah Stone was standing, smiling toward him.

"Well, well," he chuckled, "if it isn't Steve Lake, the harmonica player in person. How's the one-man band?"

Asah Stone looked like a smoothie. He was tall, with broad shoulders. He had smartly cut grey hair, narrow grey eyes. He wore a grey suit, and his thin, long grey face had the wary expression of one who knew all the answers. Looking at him Steve thought of a clever grey fox.

ASAH STONE was a guy going places. The best night spots saw him; he squired the snappiest looking blondes. He spent big money, and got his name in the paper often enough to have a reputation as the best private dick in America—and he charged accordingly.

"Hello," said Lake. He kept his dislike for Asah Stone out of his eyes.

"Deduction tells me," said Stone, "that you've come about the Dewarr diamonds."

"You must do it with mirrors," rejoined Lake. "What I want to know is, will there be a pinch in the Dewarr case? How did you recover the diamonds? And—"

"One question at a time," laughed Stone. "I happen to know that you don't own a badge any longer—that, if you're lucky, you'll wear your

heels to the ankle shuffling around in harness. But at that I'm willing to tell you a few things."

"Go ahead," Lake kept his mouth stretched in a forced grin.

"There will be no pinch," stated Asah Stone. "First, because this was a dicker I made as representative of the insurance companies to save them money. Second, I don't know who did the job, anyway."

He gestured to Lake, invited him to approach the flat-topped desk. "Here is the record," he continued. "I put an advertisement in the *Sphere* to make contact with the thieves. Read it if you want to. The advertisement was answered by this letter, the words cut, as you can see, from daily newspapers. They or he or she asked fifty grand."

"I talked with the Consolidated Insurance people, and they okayed the price. I put another ad in the *Sphere*, accepting. There it is. And here's the reply, telling me to put up the dough in old five-buck bills, and check the package at Grand Central Terminal."

He grinned smartly at Lake. "Neat but not gaudy, eh?"

"Go on," said Lake grimly.

Asah Stone shrugged. "I was to walk—as you can read in the instructions—to the Twentieth Century train gate. I was to drop the check. I did so. A guy picked it up and handed it back to me. It wasn't the same check. I walked to the checking booth and turned in my stub. The package I got contained the diamonds. That's all."

"Not quite," said Lake quietly. "You saw the guy that handed you the substitute stub."

"No," corrected Asah Stone. "I deliberately didn't look at him so I wouldn't have to testify."

Lake stared at him. "It's a racket," he muttered. "You and the thieves and the insurance company, dishing somebody out of fifty grand. What's your cut?"

"The insurance company pays me an annual retainer."

"Then there'll be no pinch, no clues?"

Asah Stone shrugged. "I'm paid



to recover the jewels, not to grab hot boys. If you had any imagination you'd see that."

"It don't take any imagination to see that you connive with thieves."

Asah Stone flushed redly. "Are you insinuating I'm a crook?"

"I wouldn't know now," snapped Steve. "How did those thieves know you'd play ball? Before they had the dough they gave you the check stub. How did they know but what, having got the check stub, you might have slipped them a package of cut newspaper?"

"I've got a reputation for playing square."

"Settled other cases like this?"

"Fifteen," Stone said softly. "So what?"

"So I'm keeping on digging. I might turn up plenty."

STONE thrust his chin out, came close. "That's another crack and the last. Get to hell out of here."

He made the mistake of giving Lake a rough shove. The trigger on Lake's anger snapped home. His right arm swung up, throwing four hard knuckles and riding behind the punch one hundred and eighty pounds of fighting-mad cop. The knuckles clicked on Asah's jaw just as the private dick himself threw a punch.

A large, engraved black onyx ring on his hand scratched Lake's forehead. But Asah Stone himself went backward. He lit on the back of his neck and did not get up.

Lake rubbed his forehead, looked at the onyx ring. "A cutting ring," he said. "I'm a fool but I feel better now."

He backed to the door. Stone glared at him.

"In twenty minutes, punk, every cop in New York will be looking for you to make a pinch for assault and battery. I'll not only see you dishonorably discharged, but I'll see you in stir for that blow."

"Nuts," said Lake.

He turned and went out of the office, down to the stairway.

Lake went down to the bright sunshine of the street. He stood for a

moment, wiping the scratch on his forehead with a handkerchief.

"Steve, darling," said a voice that snapped him upright with a thrill of joy. "I figured you'd be here. And here's me to give you an earful."

Lake grinned at her. "Hello, Scrumptious. We'll have to put off getting married until I get my shield back."

"You'll put it off until I say yes," Marjorie Steele said, "and that won't be until the sixth Friday in October. I'm a career gal."

"Your career will be cooking corned beef and cabbage and raising a mess of kids." They started walking up Broadway.

"You're immodest," she smiled. "But cut out the cracking. I've got news."

"Good news?"

"If you had any imagination it would be. Listen. I was around to the Dewarr's to see about an interview on why big-bosomed lasses wear diamonds. I learned from her that the diamonds had been recovered. I immediately suspected Asah Stone's crooked hand and dropped by here to check with him before I wrote my story. And who do you think I saw going into Asah Stone's office?"

Lake's eyes gleamed. "It wasn't Santa Claus, Scrumptious."

"It may be Santa Claus to you," she retorted. "Darling, it was Moxie Ardery."

"Not the beautiful boy bandit!"

"The long-lashed, peach-skinned, little rat himself," she nodded.

Lake stood very quietly, then pulled out a crumpled package of cigarettes, straightened one, lit it, handed it to Marjorie and then lit one for himself.

"Stand very quiet, Lovely," he said, "until I think this through. I've got an idea and since it didn't tear my head open maybe it's good."

He stared abstractedly across City Hall Park. Moxie Ardery was notorious from one end of Broadway to the other as a youth of twenty-five who had started out as a punk and had become, in a few years, the smartest bandit in the game. His

downy skin and handsome looks got him into the better hotels where women fell for him, and he sized up a lone woman or a husband and wife with jewels. The jewels were stolen either by a sneak thief or at the point of a gun. Moxie was never caught with the goods, and if arrested had an alibi.

**M**OXIE is an underworld term meaning smart, having lots on the ball. Moxie Ardery had all that. The connection between him and the Dewarr diamonds was obvious. The proof of his guilt was something else again.

The fact that he came to see Asah Stone was important enough to show Moxie as the probable intermediary to settle the details of returning the diamonds. But you couldn't prove that.

In short, as Lake realized, about all this tip-off was good for was to make Gimpy's information of value. He had to see the stoolie at once. He raised a hand, hailed a cab.

"Where are you going?" Marge demanded.

"I'm going to see a man about a horse," grinned Lake. "Thanks, Scrumptious. Have dinner with me tomorrow night and I'll give you 'Santa Lucia' on the new harmonica. It's a honey."

He got into the cab and Marjorie climbed in beside him. "I go for the dinner but God forbid I have to hear you play. Lead on, MacDuff. I smell a story for the *Sphere*."

"If I break this, you'll have a story," he agreed grimly. "This is what you people call a ring of jewel thieves. There are plenty of brains behind it."

There was silence for a while until Marge suddenly said, "You'd be a great detective if you had imagination to go with your memory for facts."

"Hey, lay off," growled Lake. "Detectives don't need imagination. You've been reading books."

Marjorie sighed. "Skip it, Lovey." And so nothing was said until they reached the Barkley Hotel on Third Avenue. The Barkley was a cheap

hotel where for a few dollars a week you got a room with a key to it, within walking distance of a bathroom.

Gimpy had a room on the fourth floor, a walk-up that left both Steve and Marge without wind. The corridor, even in daylight, was lit by the sickly glow from a drop cord bulb. The numerals twenty-six were penciled on the chipped front of a door. Lake knocked.

"It's me, Gimpy," he said, "Steve Lake."

He heard no sound and rattled the door knob impatiently. Then he pounded. "Open up, Gimpy."

Still silence. Lake looked suddenly at Marge. She was pale and suddenly her eyes were wide with intuitive horror. Lake hurled himself at the door. His broad shoulders rebounded, and he hit again. This time the flimsy lock gave and he sprawled inside. One look was enough.

"Stay out there, kid," he rapped.

But she was already behind him. He felt her sway against him. "My God," she muttered, "he's dead!"

"He wasn't sung to sleep," Lake countered. "Come on, kid, buck up."

He left her there and walked to the body that lay sprawled on the cheap, white-enameled bed. Gimpy had looked like a weasel in life, with his big buck teeth, and now, his mouth opened in death, he looked more like a weasel than ever. Lake's trained eye took in the details, so he knew what had happened as well as if he had been here.

"Somebody socked him on the jaw," he said. "See the bruise on his cheek. Odd-shaped bruise. He started for the telephone in the hall and he was shot with a silenced gun. Right through the pump—no, it must have just missed the heart because there's blood on his lips. But he didn't live long. Just long enough to take out that dollar bill."

"Dollar bill?" said Marge.

"Yeah. I wonder why?"

He felt of the body. Already getting cold. "Say an hour ago he was shot," he said. And as he spoke these words his eyes widened in surprise. "By the Lord, Scrumptious,

he was killed within a minute or two after he called me at Headquarters. Somebody heard him or knew he was going to squeal. Now he'll never squeal."

The realization sickened him. He never knew until now how much he had banked on Gimpy's information. He was up against a blank wall once more.

"Moxie Ardery," Marge called. "He did it, Steve. He must have. You told me yourself Gimpy used to play around with Moxie's mob."

Lake nodded. "The theory is logical, darling, but you have to prove it." He studied the bruise, memorizing the purple pattern of it. Then he searched the body and found nothing.

He stood for a space, bitterly disappointed. Then he took the dollar bill and stared at it curiously.

"Funny thing for a dead man to do," he muttered. "Why—well, I'll be damned!"

"What is it?" Marge cried breathlessly.

Lake pointed to the dollar bill. In the upper right-hand corner and in the lower left was printed the bill's serial number—E-62839817-N. But someone with an indelible pencil or ink had marked the letters and certain numbers. The letter E was marked, then the numbers two, eight, three, one, seven, and finally the N.

Marge looked puzzled. "I see it, but what does it mean?" she asked.

**L**AKE looked at the corpse. "Gimpy, you were a genius!"

"What do you mean?"

"Suppose," said Lake softly, "you wanted to keep a telephone number and didn't want to carry around a paper that could be found. Suppose—"

Marge cried, "It is a telephone number, Steve. EN two—eight—three—one—seven."

"Endicott 2-8317 on a hunch," said Lake.

"It's a clue." Marge was trembling with excitement.

Lake shrugged. "He didn't get it out for a tip."

He wrapped his hand in a hand-

kerchief and telephoned Centre Street. After he got Inspector Lananah and had told the facts of Gimpy's murder, he said, "And, Inspector, have them bring the infra-red camera. That bruise is peculiar."

"Hey, what you doing there? You wait until—"

Lake hung up. "Wait until he pinches me for socking Stone," he muttered. "Come on, Scrumptious, let's trace this telephone number."

They called the superintendent who, when he heard "police business," immediately dug into his files.

"It's a private listing," he told Lake. "Robert H. Hardell, Importer, Nine-fifty-one Riverside Drive."

Marge cried, "Moxie Ardery for a dime."

"Maybe," said Lake. "Anyway, you go into your office and write what you have and I'll meet you at eight for dinner."

"Then we go calling," she laughed.

"Then we go calling."

At eight o'clock, however, Lake was not waiting for Marge. He was crossing the lobby of the apartment house at 951 Riverside Drive. She'd be sore, he knew, but if this was what he expected it to be, then no girl belonged.

The Nassau negro took him up to the ninth floor and pointed to a door. Mr. Ha'dell lives there, but I don't know if he's in."

Lake rapped on the door. For a long time there was silence. Then a voice said, "Who's there?"

"Janitor," said Lake. "There's water leaking into the apartment below."

There was a long silence, the sound of whispering. Then the door was unlocked, opened about six inches.

"Listen, Janitor," said a voice, "fix it later, can't you? My wife's—"

Lake put his number nine shoe in the opening, his shoulder against the door, and pushed. He went inside in a hurry as the resisting body surrendered to his strength.

"Just a minute, Moxie," he said, "this is a pinch and the charge is murder."

The boy bandit was beautiful—no other word described him. Yellow

curly hair, bright blue eyes and a soft, pink skin on a perfectly chiseled face. Only his ear lobes—or rather lack of lobes—distorted his face, hinted at the mental twist that had made him a crook. That, and the bitter cold, inhuman blaze in his eyes as he stared at Lake.

Lake thrust the door closed behind him and backed the youth into the living room. There was consternation, hate—even fear—in Moxie's expression as he slowly retreated. Once Lake saw him glance swiftly at his wrist-watch, a diamond and platinum affair that belonged more properly on a woman's wrist.

Lake kept his hand in his right pocket, the nose of his gun pressing hard against the cloth and making a lump. Beyond Moxie he saw a yellow-haired bit of painted fluff, with wide, saucerlike eyes. Also a short, stocky man whom Lake had never seen before.

"Drop your guns in the middle of the floor," Lake said, "and do it easy—I'm just holding this trigger with my thumb."

Moxie said, "You can't do this, you punk-headed lug. You ain't a dick any more—you're out. You ain't got any right to come in here—"

"Skip it," cut in Lake. "I'm here. You killed Gimpy Martin—"

"That's a lie," screamed the girl. "He was with me and I'll swear to it."

"Yeah?" said Lake. "How did you know when the kill was done?"

Her crimson mouth bit down. Moxie said, "Shut up, Mae, every time you open that trap of yours you put your foot in it."

Lake waited until two guns and a blackjack lay in the middle of the floor. Then he moved slowly toward the table where the telephone was.

"Sit down," he said, "while I call the Homicide guys."

Moxie was purple. "But I didn't bump Gimpy," he screamed, "and besides—"

It was the short, stocky man who changed the complexion of things. His hand flicked once and an ink-stand flew through the air as straight as an arrow. Lake had no time to duck. It smashed into the side of his

head, a glancing blow but sufficient to trip him, make him lunge to catch his balance, and blind his ink-filled eyes to the trio. The short, stocky man was hustling in on a follow-up, but Moxie beat him to Lake. Moxie made one flying leap, landed on Lake's back and hooked both hands around Lake's throat.

"Get his gun, George," Moxie cried.

George did more than that. He hooked a punch to Lake's jaw, then kicked the detective in the stomach. With Moxie's weight on him, Lake went down. Then they had his gun. He was brutally kicked toward the sofa.

**I**N that instant had Moxie changed. His eyes grew to pin-points and his mouth was lifted in a terrible smile. "Swell work, George. I admit he had me going."

"Never let a dumb cop get you going," said George. "I had that ink-stand all set the minute I saw him come in."

They searched Lake but found nothing but his two-deck harmonica, the one he had paid twenty-two dollars for.

Moxie laughed. "I remember now—you're the guy that plays the mouth-organ."

Lake went on wiping the ink off his face. The girl called Mae laughed hysterically, "God, I thought he was gonna bust up the big job we got—"

"Shut up," snapped Moxie, and George added, "Geez, get a twist into something and you start walkin' on dynamite."

Moxie glanced at his wrist-watch again. He reached for the telephone. "I'll ask what we got to do with this flattie," he said. "I'm worried."

A silence came over the room and Lake, sitting there, listened intently as Moxie dialed the number. The detective reached out and picked up his harmonica, but he did not blow into it. He was counting the clicks, as Moxie's forefinger wheeled the dial and let it slide back.

Presently Moxie said, "Hello—yeah. Why, we was all set to shove off for this job and this lug Steve Lake came in behind a rod— Yeah,

we grabbed him. Do we throw him to the crabs?"

He listened intently. So did Lake, but while he could hear certain metallic sounds over the wire, he could not hear a word spoken.

Moxie nodded as if he could see the speaker. "I get it. Time-table stuff. Okay, I'll do it that way. I'll drop the stuff with you and then fix this punk dick."

He hung up and turned to George. "You stay here while me and Mae do what we got to do. If this lug gives you any trouble, bounce him one good."

"And how!" grinned George. "Permanent?"

Moxie nodded slowly. "Permanent."

Lake blew softly into the harmonica and, with his fingers cupped around it, made "Pennies from Heaven" come out with surprising melody and skill. Moxie thrust Mae through the door. He drew on his gloves.

"Permanent," he repeated.

Mae was saying as the door closed, "I never knew mouth-organ music was so pretty. Now, you take Pete—"

"You take him," growled Moxie, "he's your husband."

The door banged after them. Lake played the last bar. "Does this bother you?" he asked.

GEORGE blasted smoke from his nostrils, took out the cigarette, spat in the waste basket. "Go ahead, it don't bother me none."

Lake's eyes moved reflectively around the room. He blew into the instrument and this time, more loudly, played, "The Night and You." The music was quite loud. George lit a cigarette from the stub of the first and all the movement he made was his foot beating time to the music. His automatic pistol and the hand holding it lay idle in his lap.

Lake stopped for a time, staring at the opened windows and French doors that led to a balcony.

"You really blow that thing," George said.

"Lake said, 'Yeah, I've been practicing since I was a kid.'"

He glanced at his wrist-watch. A shade of frown passed over his forehead. He began to blow again, a hot swing tune that had both of George's feet tapping, had his shoulders swinging, his head nodding appreciatively.

George began to whistle through his teeth in accompaniment. The gun, more relaxed, was disturbed by his leg's movements and slid over to one side. Gun and hand both were ready to slide down toward the floor. George was completely relaxed.

Lake, beating time with his feet, got himself into position for a plan he hoped to carry out. Swifter and swifter he worked up the time, shoulders shaking, sitting bolt upright.

George said, "Hah-chaa! Boy, is that hot?"

And then as he was blowing out the last swift measures Lake, already taut, came off the couch in one hurtling movement that was a flow of strength and desperation. The harmonica flew out and whacked George across the nose. He tried to raise his gun but it takes time to coordinate your muscles after you're all let down. And he didn't get the gun straightened out until Lake was alongside.

One powerful downward blow paralyzed George's arm and the gun belched redly to drive a slug into the floor. Lake hooked George to the chin. He lifted him up, socked him again. And George staggered back, tripped and fell headlong to bang his head nastily against the side of the desk drawer.

Blood drooled from his scalp and he didn't move. Lake got the gun, tore up the portieres to make bonds, and trussed George until he looked like a mummy.

Lake hurried to the door, then went back for his harmonica and nodded. "Swell!" he muttered, and went out in the hall.

He almost knocked Marge down. She had a policeman with her. For once Marge had lost her poise. She leaped at Lake and flung her arms around his neck.

"Steve!" she gasped. "I thought they had you. Oh, you were smart. It took imagination to play that har-

monica so I could locate the apartment. I heard it and knew they had you and got a cop."

Lake said huskily, "You mean, you were going to crash in against those monkeys?"

"You're okay," she said, flustered, "except when you run off and leave me to pay for my own dinner— Did you get Moxie?"

The mention of the boy bandit brought Lake back to reality. He nodded to the cop.

"There's a guy in there named George. He knows things. But you won't be able to hose them out in time. You take him down. I've got things to do." He glanced anxiously at his watch. "Come on, Marge," he grabbed her hand.

In the taxicab Marge gasped, "My God, where's the fire? What's up?"

Lake said, "We're going to bust up this jewel gang."

"You've got ideas," she said.

"Yes," but he didn't tell her what they were. At Times Square he stopped long enough to call Centre Street. To the detective who replied, he said, "A new hotel robbery reported?" He gave his name.

"Yeah. A Mrs. Ida Whitehouse was robbed of eighty grand in pearls not twenty minutes ago. But how the hell did you know?"

"Do you believe in fairies?" Lake said, and hung up.

Back in the cab, Marge said to him, "Where are we going?"

"Fishing," said Lake. "Let's hope they all bite good."

At City Hall Park he picked up the cop on the corner. "Get your gat ready," Lake said, "this may be tougher than you think." They covered the two blocks to Stone's office.

Something in Lake's expression brought the policeman silently at his heels. Marge was panting with excitement as they went up the stairs. The same girl was putting more lipstick on the same lips when Lake came in.

"Is the mental giant in there?" Steve asked.

"Yeah, but he's busy."

"No tip-off," he growled, waving his gun at her head.

She let go the plug. He banged against the door and, when it held, drove his fist through the frosted glass, and then reached inside and unlocked the door. Asah Stone was jumping up from behind the desk. Moxie Ardery had a gun out, but the cop said, "Now, now," and Asah Stone, half-turning, growled, "Are you crazy? Put up that gun."

THEN, his eyes blazing, he strode to Lake. "Now, what the hell does this mean, stupid?"

"It means," rejoined Lake calmly, "that you're under arrest for the murder of Gimpy Martin. You're charged with being the big shot of a bandit syndicate, picking out the people to be robbed, and splitting the insurance dough that you get for recovering the jewels."

"It means, rat, that you're an accessory before and after the fact of the robbery of Mrs. Dewarr and Mrs. Ida Whitehouse. And one buck will get you fifty that Moxie Ardery's got the pearls on him or they're in your desk."

"You're nuts," laughed Asah Stone. "Me kill Gimpy Martin? Why should I want to kill a punk like that?"

"Because he knew you were the guy that engineered the thefts," said Lake pleasantly. "You got your records from the insurance company. They told you who had the most valuable jewels and how much insurance they carried as a precaution. You got guys like Moxie to go out and knock off the catch, and then split with them on the dough paid by the insurance company."

"Well," grinned Asah Stone, "if you're that crazy, are you crazy enough to say you can prove it?"

"Sure," nodded Lake. All of a sudden he grabbed Asah Stone's right hand. He wrenched off the ring, the black onyx ring with the peculiar design.

"You hit Gimpy with this, and the ring left its impression. This new photographing by infra-red rays picks up designs like that easy. It was your trademark." His face never revealed what a hunch, what a guess that was.

Asah Stone turned livid.

"Then," went on Lake, "Moxie telephoned you after he caught me in his apartment. Called you about this Whitehouse job. He dialed the number in a silent room, Stone, and I counted the clicks. Two, two, six, six, nine, two, one. Check that on any telephone and it's Canal 6-6921."

Before Stone could say a word, Lake went on, "And, Moxie, you take a rap for murdering Gimpy, too. You were with Stone, and that makes you an accessory. Gimpy put the finger on you by holding a dollar bill that had your telephone number on it."

"No, no!" howled Moxie suddenly. "Stoney knocked him off. On account of Gimpy seen Stoney's girl wearing that Dewarr necklace before Stoney sent it back. He did it. I didn't know he was going—"

Stone went for the man in a death struggle. But Lake and the cop pulled them apart and held them, screaming accusations and invectives. A phone call brought a prowler car and the Homicide Squad men.

The next day Lake went to the *Sphere* office in response to Marge's

summons. "You're reinstated," she said. "Just got a call from Centre Street. Better yet, Harkness says he intends to make you a second-grade detective."

"How sweet of him," said Lake sourly. "They make you a second-grade dick today, and tomorrow if you fumble, they take it away."

However, he was thrilled, though he didn't let Marge see it.

She said earnestly, "Steve, you're wonderful. I never knew you had that much imagination. Figuring out that telephone call, marking the print of that ring—"

"Imagination the devil!" protested Lake. "Those are facts. You just find them and you don't need any imagination. They tell their own story."

She reached up, gave him a hearty kiss. "Does that arouse your imagination?" she demanded.

"No," said Lake, "that tells me that on a detective second-grade's pay we have an apartment on the West Side, and you learn to cook corned beef and cabbage at least once a week."



*Next Month: THE BUDDHA WHISPERS,  
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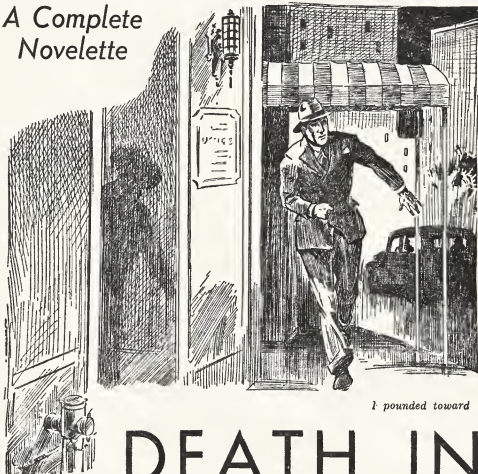
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*I pounded toward*

# DEATH IN

## CHAPTER I

### REACHING HANDS

**A** PRIVATE detective can sense trouble coming, folks say.

But I wasn't sensing anything when I started back to my office after dinner that night. I rounded the corner without a thought in my mind—and then I saw it.

A car was in front of my office building. A girl stood next to the car, back to it, facing the building entrance. Her face was crazy with

fear, and her hands were tearing at her throat. No, not at her throat! They were tearing at two hands reaching out from the sedan, hands that strangled her!

I saw veins knot on those murderous hands, saw the girl's face suffuse with blood.

I pounded toward the car at top speed. If I could get my mitts on the strangler—

But he heard me coming. I got just a flash of blue serge sleeves above the strangling hands, then the

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## To Whitewash Black Deeds, a Wily Killer

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# Tactics Against a Game of Greed!



By PAUL  
ERNST

Author of "The  
Chair Cheater,"  
"Hired for  
Slaughter," etc.

*the car at top speed*

## a COTTAGE

girl was released and the car screamed into gear. I took one leap after it, and stopped. The girl needed attention badly.

She'd looked like she was dead when she slumped to the walk with her face white and her throat bruised. But she opened her eyes when I bent over her. Blue eyes. Nice.

"I'll take you to a doctor," I said, picking her up.

"No—I'm all right," she came back, voice thick and burred. "I

fainted for a minute. That's all."

Game kid! Her throat was turning livid now.

"Put me down, please," she said huskily.

"Okay. How did that happen back there? Who was trying to kill you?"

The girl shook her head. "I had my back to the car when the hands reached out. I didn't see who owned the hands. Please—I have to see a man named Tevin, in this building."

"You're seeing him now," I said.

## Runs the Gamut of Mass Murder!

"You're Private Detective James Teyin?"

"Right," I replied, setting her down on her feet. "Come on up to the office and tell me about it."

She sat in the visitor's chair, trembling but not hysterical, and explained.

"I was nearly killed three days ago. Somebody tried to club me down, late at night, on the street. I thought I'd see a private detective about it. You were recommended. I came here and your office was closed. I walked around the block, then stopped at the entrance next to that parked car, which I thought was empty. And the—hands—reached out for me."

"If you were attacked three days ago," I said, "how is it you're just getting around to asking for help? And why not the police instead of a private detective?"

"I went to the police." The girl shrugged. "They said I must have been attacked by a common thug, who ran when I screamed. But I know better. The man didn't try to take my handbag. But the police took three days to come to their conclusion. After which I came here."

I nodded. "Okay. Let's start the routine. Name?"

"Harriet Warner."

"Circumstances?"

"I'm private secretary to a paper wholesaler. An uncle and two cousins of mine live in the city, but I live alone." She looked around my office. It's pretty well furnished if I do say so myself. "I'm afraid I can't afford you for very long."

"Skip the walnut and bronze," I said. "I'll make the fee right. You're an office worker, not wealthy, yet twice you're almost murdered. Got any idea why?"

"It might have something to do with the other reason why I wanted to see a private detective," she said.

"What other reason?" I snapped her up.

"Another uncle of mine, living in the Colchester Hills section, died a few days ago. His will is to be read tomorrow evening at his country

place. After the attack the other night, I thought I needed a detective not only to investigate but also to go with me to the place as a guard."

"Well!" I said. "A will, several heirs. Maybe you're to be murdered for your share of your uncle's fortune."

Harriet Warner shook her head.

"Uncle Rudolph had money, but I'm not to get any of it. He told me a short time ago that all I was to get was his Colchester Hills home. The rest goes to my Uncle Ralph, Rudolph's brother, and my two cousins, sons of Rudolph's dead sister."

I shrugged. "Perhaps there's something of value hidden in this new home of yours."

"I don't think there's a buried treasure angle." Harriet smiled. "You'll see when you get there. It would be like trying to bury treasure in a city street. It's solid rock around my uncle's house."

**I** MADE an appointment to meet her next morning and drive her to Colchester Hills. I had things all docketed in my mind. We'd hear the will read, discover that Miss Warner had inherited more than she had expected to, and thus find a motive for one of the other heirs to murder her. With the motive in my possession, I could soon nail the killer.

All neatly docketed in my mind. And all just as wrong as hell!

She was "Harriet" and I was "Jim" before we got to the Colchester Hills next evening. An awful nice kid. The more I saw of her the more I liked her; and the more I liked her the madder I got at the skunk who had tried to strangle her bare-handed.

We got to the place at eight. Colchester Hills is rich man's stuff. Big estates. High, meshed-wire fences. Picturesque cliffs and waterfalls.

The dead Rudolph Packer's place was modest, though; only an acre in extent. The house was small, Cape Cod in style, of whitewashed brick. Whitewashed? And how! The stuff

was so spotless, that it hurt your eyes to look at it.

The grounds were solid humped stone, with barely a skin of soil over it. Harriet had been right about buried treasure. You couldn't have buried a dog biscuit here without dynamiting.

Three cars were in front of the Cape Cod cottage. Two were nice jobs. The third could have been six years younger without hurting anything.

"That's the lawyer's car," said Harriet, of the latter. "Uncle Rudolph didn't have a city lawyer. He did business with a man named Cook, from the near village of Boyn-ton."

"Your uncle lived here alone?" I asked.

"Alone, except for Strine," said Harriet. "Strine was with Uncle Rudolph for years. His servant. He cooked, cared for the house and grounds, everything. He'll be broken up about Uncle Rudolph's death."

"Did Mr. Packer commute to a city office?"

"No. He was retired. He played the market now and then, that's all. Played it shrewdly, I guess."

THE door of the house opened. An old man with a leather face under white hair looked at us.

"Good evening, Strine," Harriet said and smiled.

The old man bobbed his head.

"This is—a friend, Strine. Mr. Tevin, George Strine."

The old boy bobbed his head again wordlessly. Harriet and I stepped through the door and into the living room.

A dry-looking, elderly man with sideburns came up.

"I've got something to tell you," I heard old Strine say to him in a whisper. "I—"

The elderly man only said, "Later, please," and looked at us.

Harriet introduced him as the lawyer, Bruce Cook.

"The others are all here," Cook said. "They're out in back. I'll get them."

Harriet and I settled ourselves

in the living room, and in a minute the rest straggled in; her Uncle Ralph, a middle-aged man with close-set dark eyes; her cousin, Arthur Fitch, a blond young fellow with a mouth like a gash in his face; her other cousin Corey Fitch, a taciturn man of thirty who stared at me with hostile eyes.

I didn't like Harriet's relatives. It didn't make me like 'em any more to have Arthur Fitch say:

"Why is Mr. Tevin here? He has no connection with the family. A reading of a will is certainly a private thing."

"Is there any clause in the will forbidding me to bring a friend?" demanded Harriet spunkily.

Cook looked over the top of his reading glasses, fussy but not unkindly.

"As far as the will is concerned, you may bring any one you please, Miss Warner."

With that settled, Cook droned over the contents of the will. Harriet's guess had been right. She got the house and grounds and all therein contained. The dead man's brother and nephews shared about forty-eight thousand dollars in cash. Such was the essence of it.

Cook started packing papers in his briefcase. Corey Fitch and Ralph Packer walked to the French windows, ignoring Harriet and me. Arthur Fitch went toward the back of the house.

A MOMENT later his horrified shout came to us.

"My God! Strine!"

I ran through the rear door of the living room, through the dining room, with the rest at my heels. Arthur Fitch wasn't shouting any more, but I could hear his heavy breathing, like sobbing, and I ran for that.

I found myself in the kitchen. Fitch stood beside a table, staring down at something. Something of which I could see only two legs sprawled in grotesque angles on the floor.

I jumped to the table and looked down at—a corpse.

It was Strine. He lay on his face in a red pool. From his back stuck the wooden handle of a butcher knife.

The blade had pierced Strine's heart. He'd never known what hit him.

I turned to keep Harriet back, but she had already seen. Her face was the color of death.

She looked at me with horror in her eyes, then stared at the dead man again.

"They did to Strine—what they tried to do—to me," she whispered through white lips.

I put my arm around her shoulders and helped her back to the living room. Then I called the Boynton sheriff.

**I** KEPT thinking of one thing. The old servant's urgent whisper to Lawyer Cook. "I've got something I must tell you—"

Had Strine been killed to prevent his speaking to Cook? But what could he have had to say that led to murder? He hadn't been given anything in the will but a home in this house for the rest of his life. Nothing there to kill him for.

The sheriff came from Boynton. His name was Schule and he had a belly and china-blue eyes that stuck out.

I didn't think much of him.

If I didn't like Schule, I cared even less for Harriet's relatives in the red light of murder!

Ralph Packer was grey-faced with fear and his close-set, dark eyes darted everywhere at once. Corey Fitch's dark face was blood-congested, and his eyes glittered in a feverish way. Arthur Fitch wandered around with his hands in his pockets and his slitlike mouth as hard as granite. A sadist's mouth. How the hell had a girl like Harriet emerged from his brood?

Schule started with me first, alone in the living room.

"Did you hear the old man yell or anything when he was killed in the kitchen?"

"No," I said. "He wouldn't have been able to yell. He was struck

from behind and the blow killed him instantly."

"When I want opinions I'll ask for 'em," snapped Schule. "You just answer questions. Were you in the kitchen between the time you got here and the time Strine was found dead?"

I shook my head.

"Got proof of that?"

"Miss Warner can tell you. I was in the living room with her from the minute I set foot in the house."

"She's your only proof?" Schule looked as triumphant as though he'd discovered something. "Was Strine killed before you gathered in here, do you think? Or afterward?"

"You told me you didn't want opinions," I reminded him.

"I'm a duly authorized officer of the law!" he blustered, getting purple. "You answer my questions!"

"Okay. You want me to say whether Strine was killed by the man who found his body, Arthur Fitch, or not. I don't know. But I think Strine was killed before the will was read, while everybody was out in back, except Miss Warner and myself. The blood had begun to coagulate a little when I got to him."

"Yeah, but which could have done it?" muttered Schule, for a minute not pompous. "The two Fitch brothers, old Cook, Ralph Packer—" He jerked himself up. "But don't think I'm lettin' you and Miss Warner out just because she's pretty and you're a private detective. Tell Miss Warner to come in here."

It's bad luck to paste a sheriff on the jaw, so I just went out. The rest were in the dining room. Somehow my flesh crawled when I saw them, silent and white-faced, sitting around the dining room table like so many ghosts.

I looked at Harriet, who sat a little apart next to old Cook. Someone in this room, it was almost certain, had tried twice to kill her. The same person, with almost equal certainty, had murdered Strine. But why?

I motioned silently for her to go in to the sheriff.

## CHAPTER II

## HIDDEN TREASURE



WHILE the sheriff was grilling the rest, I moved around. I had swung back to my first belief. Something valuable was hidden around this place that made Harriet's bequest the richest of the lot. Something known only to the killer, who had tried to murder Harriet to get it, and had succeeded in murdering Strine to keep him from giving Lawyer Cook a hint of it. That was the only theory that fitted in with the attacks on the girl, the killing of the servant and Strine's urgent whisper: "There is something I must tell you."

Something of value hidden here, mentioned in the will only to the extent that Harriet got the house and grounds and "all therein contained." I set out to track it down.

The grounds, as has been said, were out. You can't bury things—bonds, jewelry, what not—in solid rock. That left the house and garage.

The garage was ruled out soon. Its walls were solid concrete. Its floors, of cement, could not have been disturbed without leaving a trace; anyway, under them was the inevitable rock. Its ceiling was rafters with shingles laid directly on them; and certainly no valuable article would be hidden in a can of oil or a box of tools or the dead man's sedan.

That left only the house, which seemed doubtful to me.

The walls were out. I had noticed that the partition walls were of paper-thin modern construction. No room in them for anything, in the first place; in the second, any disturbance of them would have meant calling in outside labor to replaster or repaper, which might have given the hiding place away.

The outer walls were of brick, two bricks thick. Solid. You couldn't hide anything there, either, I decided. Attic was too obvious. Floors—

Old Rudolph Packer, in building the place, had gone in for antiquity. Ceilings were beamed, with bare wood of the floor above showing between the beams. No space there to store things secretly. And there was no basement; the house rested on solid rock.

That left the furniture, considering which was slightly a melodramatic idea, or the trick of hiding something right under your eyes.

I walked toward the house, white as snow in the moonlight with its immaculate coat of whitewash. I saw Harriet coming out of the side door. She looked around and I waved. She came toward me.

"I couldn't stay in there any more," she said, in a low voice. "I'm afraid."

I nodded. That was certainly understandable, in view of the probability that a murderer was under that roof. Of course the rest were safe, now, with the sheriff right in the house; but nevertheless Harriet couldn't be blamed for wanting to get away.

We walked slowly around the house toward the front driveway. I kept looking around. If there had been any lawn ornaments I would have investigated them. But there were none. I've never seen a place so bare of possibilities for hiding things! Harriet would have to pull the furniture apart, I thought, if this idea of hidden valuables persisted enough to make the effort worth while. I had to admit that I was losing my own conviction again.

"How long will we be here. Jim?" she asked me wistfully.

"I don't know," I said. "You should be able to leave pretty soon now. Me too, I think. The others—well, it depends on the sheriff's ideas." And I added, but only to myself, "If it was me, I'd hold the two Fitches and your uncle and give them plenty grilling."

We stood looking at the road, fifty yards or so from the drive. Cars hummed past. Now and then a local driver, recognizing the sheriff's car at the door, would pause a little. But for the most part they sped past, serenely unaware that a murdered man lay in the snow-white Cape Cod cottage. It gave me a kind of funny feeling.

Harriet gripped my arms suddenly. "What was that?"

I hadn't heard anything.

"A sound from behind us," she insisted. "Around the side of the house."

We walked back to the corner of the house and around. And the moment we rounded the corner, we saw the long dark blotch on the ground next to the white wall. And Harriet screamed, while I grabbed her elbows and turned her around.

"Into the house! Get the sheriff."

I went to the long blotch—and looked down into the dead face of Arthur Fitch. A face that was untouched, though the bony structure of the head behind it was a shattered mass. A mechanic's heavy hammer, reddened and gleaming in the moonlight lay near the pulped head.

**T**HE rest safe now, with the sheriff in the house? I echoed my thought of a moment ago with a cold chill touching my bones. I'd bumped up against a lot of violence in my life. But I'd never seen anything to match the ruthlessness, the icy recklessness, of this killer now among us.

I ran, on blind impulse, to the nearest door and into the house after Harriet. I didn't want her out of my sight! Not any more!

Two men dead within a space of an hour and a half! One of them murdered while a law officer was conducting an investigation under the same roof!

But the sheriff wasn't having any of my guardianship over the girl. With two deputies, hastily called from the village, to watch the dining room in which every one sat,

he beckoned me out to the second dead man. I went, leaving Corey Fitch looking numbed by the shock of his brother's death, Lawyer Cook badly unstrung and fussing with one of the deputies who refused stolidly to let him get into his briefcase, and Ralph Packer a palsied mass of fear.

I have never seen a man so frightened as Packer. But it was not the double fear you'd expect. The fact that he was logically a murder suspect didn't seem to occur to him. It was fear of death from the as yet undetected murderer that seemed to hold him most abjectly.

Looking around outside with Schule, I catalogued the findings. It was pretty easy, because they were so few.

Arthur Fitch had been killed from behind with the hammer taken from a tool box in the garage. A man could have done it all in three minutes by running from house to garage, getting the weapon, and running back to where Fitch stood smoking in the moonlight, and returning swiftly to the house again. Harriet and I had been in front, so we were out of the way.

Why had Fitch been outside? Well, a half smoked cigarette put out by the damp grass near him told that. He had been out taking a cigarette, getting relief from the tenseness inside the house.

And the killer had seen him and seized the chance to get rid of him? Why? Well, why had Strine been killed and Harriet attacked? It all seemed to make increasingly less sense as it got more complicated.

Schule had shed his pomposity by now. This second killing, done while he'd been within ten yards, was going to look like the devil for him. He flashed his light feverishly and pointlessly around.

"I was talking to Mr. Packer," he said, over and over again. "I said to him to get Arthur Fitch in again. I told him to hunt Fitch up because it seemed to me, before, that Fitch had something he wanted to say and that he wasn't quite sure enough



about it to put it into words. Something on his mind. So I wanted to talk to him again. And then the girl comes running in saying there's a dead man out on the lawn, and it's this guy, Fitch! Damn it, I'm sure he had something to say, only before he wasn't positive enough. You wouldn't talk against a brother or uncle, for instance, unless you *knew* what you were talking about."

"You sent Ralph Packer after him?" I repeated.

"Yeah. And uncles have killed nephews before. I think I'll arrest Packer." He looked pathetically relieved. "Yeah, that's the stuff. It must have been Packer. He went after Fitch on my orders, found him alone, and killed him."

"Why?"

"Eh?"

"I said, why? What reason would he have for murdering his sister's son?"

"How would I know? But that's what must have happened."

"Where was Corey Fitch?"

Schule gnawed his lip again. "I don't know. He wasn't in the dining room. Mr. Cook can testify to that. So both the uncle and the brother of this guy were on the loose. Either one might have done it."

"Or Cook, or Miss Warner, or me," I said.

His eyes came back to mine with plenty of suspicion in them.

"I'm not forgettin' you and the girl were out on the lawn!"

"Keep on remembering it and see what it gets you," I told him. "I'd have a lot of reasons for killing guys I never even saw before."

"Miss Warner would have a reason. She splits this guy's share of Packer's money, now."

I bit my tongue over that one. It was so evident—and so unexpected. Harriet *had* a motive for murder, in the eyes of the law.

I answered a possible law court as well as Schule, when I said: "Nuts! I was with her when both men died. I saw her being attacked herself. If you don't want to take my word for it, just re-

member how much strength it takes to stick a knife into meat. Miss Warner wouldn't have the strength to drive a dull kitchen knife into a man's heart from behind."

"You would," said Schule.

And on that friendly note we went in to the house again, and Schule again began chasing in circles to get his man. Meanwhile, I stuck close and tried to nail the killer on my own hook. But I got no farther than Schule did.

Ralph Packer, sweating so that perspiration stains showed clear through his blue serge suit, said he had been in the bedroom, still searching for Arthur Fitch, till just before Fitch was killed. Corey Fitch claimed he had been in the bathroom. Cook had been in the dining room. Amazingly, when you remember a sheriff's presence right in the house, any one of them could have made murderous opportunity out of the fact that Arthur Fitch had nervously decided to smoke a cigarette in the moonlight.

SCHULE grilled us all again, one by one. He asked some good questions at that, I noted with professional interest. But he didn't get anywhere, so he started a second time.

We were again in the dining room—Cook and Packer and Corey Fitch and Harriet and I. Schule's voice came to us from the living room.

"Mr. Cook."

Cook got up, moistening his lips, averting his eyes from the door leading into the kitchen. There were two dead men lying in the kitchen now. One of the deputies opened the dining room door for the lawyer, and he walked through the tiny hall into the living room.

And then, just before the deputy had the door closed again, I saw Cook stop next to the outside living room door and stare into the night. His mouth went slack. His hands went up to pluck at his trembling lips. And he yelled hoarsely.

It was a high, brittle cry, almost like a woman's scream. He pointed through the screened doorway.

"Sheriff! Out there! Oh, my God!"

The deputy wasn't interested in closing the dining room door any more. He threw it wide open and leaped toward Cook. Schule got there first. His hand gripped Cook's shoulder.

"What is it? What do you see out there?"

Cook fought for words. When they did come they were like icy whips.

"A figure—out there—in the moonlight! I saw it! *It looked like Strine!*"

### CHAPTER III

#### IN THE DARK



HARRIET'S gasp was like a sob. A sort of moan came from Ralph Packer's lips. Then I was out of the dining room on the heels of the other deputy and Corey Fitch. They started for the grounds. I didn't. I went for the

kitchen, where Strine lay.

I got the door open, had one glimpse of two sprawled bodies on the floor, and then the lights went out. All of them. Every light in the place.

I heard Cook's fear-packed scream sound out again, from the front of the house. And, an instant after that, a sound that drew a hoarse shout in echo from my own lips. Harriet Warner's shriek, which died in horrible fashion into a choking moan which was succeeded by complete silence.

I lunged from the kitchen, hitting the partly opened door in the pitch darkness. I got to the dining room door, and it was locked against me. Through it I could hear a terrible scraping of high heels on hardwood floor.

The sound drove me crazy for a minute. I banged my shoulder against the door, backed off, tried it again. Running steps sounded

outside, and the kitchen door to the back yard burst open.

I saw four dark shapes outlined against the moonlight, heard Schule's voice.

"My God, what's happened now? Strine—"

A voice I thought was Corey Fitch's cut the sheriff's words off.

"Strine's here, where he was before. Anyway, there's two bodies."

These things I heard with half my mind. The rest was in that locked dining room, with the girl whose heels were rasping so desperately and convulsively on the floor. I caught up a kitchen chair and smashed it to kindling against the door.

And the door only quivered a little.

I turned, thrusting a couple of shadowy figures out of my way, ran out the back door and around to the dining room window. I smashed the glass and climbed in. As the glass crashed, I thought I heard a sound across the room from the window, but wasn't sure.

In the room's dimness I saw Harriet lying near the table. I jumped to her side, bent down. I couldn't feel a pulse. Her face was ghastly in its pallor. Even in the dim light I could see how her throat was swelled and discolored.

I got her hands, saying something or other to her all the time. Things I hadn't a right to say, so soon. But they came out anyway. I began working her arms back and forth in artificial respiration.

I heard somebody yell in the living room, and then, after quite a little while, the lights went on. All of which meant little to me. The important fact was that Harriet was beginning to breathe again, and in a little while she opened her eyes.

"Jim," she whispered.

"Don't talk," I said, chafing her wrists and making her head as comfortable as possible on my knee.

"Lights went out — somebody grabbed me. Almost got me—this time—Jim."

I kept on chafing her wrists. Almost got her? Hell, she had been

actually and literally dead. Only artificial breathing had snapped her out of it again. I carried her to the bedroom.

"I'm not leaving you again if the house burns down around our ears!" I told her grimly.

She smiled at me, and rubbed her throat.

"Yes, you are," she said, words coming painfully. "I'll lock this window so no one can get in without breaking the glass, and lock the door. And I'll sit up in bed, out of line of the window, with your gun in my hands. You've got to help the sheriff get this killer, Jim."

Well, she was right, though I hated to agree with her. And finally I went out, hearing the key scrape in the lock as she closed the door after me.

I went to the kitchen first. Old Strine lay on the floor as he had before. There was the knife handle protruding from his back, with the slowly coagulating blood all around it. Dead as yesterday's mackerel. The knife handle sticking up proved that.

I went to the living room. Why the hell had Cook said he'd seen Strine in the moonlight when that was utterly impossible?

In the living room I got the next shock out of a night of crazy surprises.

Old Cook lay on a divan with Schule and a deputy and Corey Fitch all bending over him. The lawyer's forehead was laid open and blood ran down his cheek, smearing in his sparse sideburns.

"We found him in the living room doorway, like this," Schule said to me. The sheriff was completely lost now.

"What happened?" I asked Cook.

"I don't know." His voice trembled. "I saw—that horrible figure in the moonlight. Then the others ran past me, out the door onto the grounds. I didn't see it any more, but I heard a step behind me. And then something hit me on the head and I was through."

"How'd the lights go out?" I asked Schule.

He had an answer for that, if he didn't for anything else. He held up a pin. It was discolored, and some of the point had melted off. It had been thrust into an electric cable, causing a short circuit.

"We found this in the dining room," Schule said.

I blinked at that. In the dining room! I remembered the procession that had crowded out after Cook's yell. The two deputies, Corey Fitch and myself. Leaving two people in the dining room. Harriet and Ralph Packer.

PACKER was in the living room with the rest of us. He sat in a chair not far from the divan. I stared at him suddenly, and caught his close-set eyes just sliding from my face. Sweat stood out on his forehead.

"A minute ago," I said slowly, "all of us ran out of the dining room except you and Miss Warner. Shortly afterward somebody came within a hair of killing her."

Packer said nothing. His heavy breathing sounded out.

"You must have been in there when she was attacked," I said.

"No! No!" His voice was thick. "I wasn't. It looks bad for me, but I wasn't. I went out just after the rest of you did, leaving Harriet alone. My own niece—surely you don't think—"

"You could have come back in again," I said, "after you'd blown the light fuse with that pin."

"I didn't! I was in the living room!"

"Then," I snapped him up, "you must have seen the attack on Mr. Cook."

Packer shivered. He wiped at his forehead, but new drops of perspiration came out at once.

"I—I couldn't see a thing—except Cook. I saw him standing there in the doorway, and then I heard him scream and saw him fall. It was as if he had been struck by something invisible. By a ghost!"

"You couldn't have been the one that hit him, by any chance?" I said.

"I swear I didn't!"

Schule joined in. "You were the one I sent to find Arthur Fitch, just before he was killed. You were out in back at about the time Strine was killed. You could have knocked Mr. Cook out after you'd blown the lights, and then could have gone back into the dining room after Miss Warner."

"No! No!"

I turned from Packer to the old lawyer, lying on the divan.

"What in the world made you think you saw a dead man—George Strine—moving out on the lawn?"

He shook his head weakly. "I don't know. Maybe I'd been thinking of Strine. When I saw a moving figure out there, I may have fitted Strine's face to it because he was in my mind. And yet, I don't think that's the explanation! I saw the face so clearly! I even seemed to see a—*a knife handle sticking out of the man's back!*"

"It couldn't have been me he saw," Packer cut in swiftly. "I was in the dining room, with you, at that minute. You know that yourself."

SCHULE wiped his forehead, which was almost as moist as Packer's.

"Maybe Strine wasn't dead after all," he muttered. "We didn't feel for his pulse to find out. We took it for granted he was dead because of the knife. He might have had strength enough left to regain consciousness, crawl out to the lawn, and then get back to the kitchen again."

"Leaving no blood spots in his trail, and not trying to call out for help," I snapped. "No, that's out. It's impossible."

"All right, Mr. Cook didn't see Strine. I guess that is kinda impossible. But he *did* see somebody. That means an outsider did all this. Somebody hiding on the grounds killed Strine and Arthur Fitch. And they're probably miles away now."

But Cook objected. He shook his head, winced at the pain the move caused.

"I don't think so, Sheriff," he

said. "There was something familiar about the figure. I'll agree that the notion that it was Strine I saw, is insane. But there was still something familiar about it, in my opinion. Though that's only an opinion."

Schule sighed. "Only one thing to be done. I'll have to take everybody in till morning. The coroner might have some light to throw, then—"

He stopped abruptly. "Where's Corey Fitch?" he snapped.

We all looked around. There were the two deputies, Schule, Packer, Cook and myself in the room.

"He was here a second ago," said one of the deputies. "He was sitting near the door."

"How'd he get out with no one seeing him?" snapped Schule.

That question answered itself. We had all been hanging on the words first of Packer, and then of Cook. By moving softly, Corey Fitch could have got from chair to door unnoticed.

The question in my mind was, *why* had he moved so stealthily. And on the heels of that question came a lightning burst of fear. Fear for Harriet!

I jumped to my feet and tore from the room. The room in which Harriet lay was at the end of the short hall. I pounded on the door, almost yelled with relief when I heard her voice come in alarm: "Who is it?"

"Me—Jim," I said. "I wanted to be sure you were all right."

I heard Schule's voice, then.

"You, Fitch! What the hell are you doing out here?"

The voice came from the kitchen. I went there. Corey Fitch, white-faced, was staring at Schule and the deputies. He was standing beside Strine's body, and there was a little blood on his hands.

"What are you doing here?"

Fitch stared at Schule and then at me.

"With all the talk about seeing Strine, I came out to see if he was really dead. I had a crazy notion that maybe he was just pretending

to be dead, with a fake knife handle glued to his back and blood from a butcher shop or something spilled on the floor to make it look convincing."

Schule's snort was an indictment. "Yeah? That's a swell explanation."

"It's the truth! Mr. Cook seemed so positive he saw Strine—"

"Why did you sneak out here without saying anything?"

"The idea was sort of crazy," Fitch said stubbornly. "I thought you'd laugh at me if I suggested it. So I slipped out by myself to make sure he was dead."

"How'd you get that blood on your hands?"

"I took hold of the knife handle to see if it was really attached to a knife blade." Fitch's face got paler yet. "It is! Strine is dead, all right!"

"You took hold of the knife handle?" Schule grated. "What a swell excuse for finding your prints on that handle! You didn't have time to wipe 'em off the handle after you killed Strine, so you tried an alibi!"

"Damn you—" Fitch began.

And then the last act of the swift drama hit us, as we confronted Fitch in the kitchen.

"Oh, my God!" came a shout from the living room. "Packer! Help!"

## CHAPTER IV

### DEAD MEN DANCE



FIGHTING to get through an all too narrow doorway, once more that night we ran from a room on each other's heels. We got to the living room. I was first, with Schule close enough behind to see over my shoulder as we reached the living

room doorway.

Cook and Packer were swaying in a deadly struggle in the center of the room. A chair was knocked over nearby. The chair Packer had been sitting in when we left.

Cook had his arms desperately around Packer's body. The arms were striving to pinion Packer's arms to his sides while with his right hand Cook held the wrist of the heavier man in a tense grip.

The briefest possible glimpse we had of the two swaying figures. Then, as we crossed the threshold the two men fell. They fell with Packer on his back, and Cook on top. Packer's arm continued to be bent at a grotesque angle behind him. And he did not move.

Cook crawled off, looking white and sick. There was blood on his right hand, which he drew from under Packer's body.

"My God," he whispered.

He turned the body over a little. We saw the handle of a paper knife sticking out of Packer's back. Cook moaned.

"I've killed him!"

The lawyer picked at loose lips with trembling fingers. He cowered back from us.

"I didn't mean to do it! He came at me with a knife. I twisted his arm behind him. He was getting the best of me when I tripped him. He fell on the knife he held in his own hand! It wasn't me!"

Schule touched his shoulder.

"You're all right," he said gruffly. "You've got plenty of witnesses that it was self defense, and that you didn't have the knife in your hand. It was self defense."

"Yes," babbled Cook. "Self defense! An accident! You saw—"

I said nothing. I looked at Bruce Cook's left coat sleeve. On the sleeve there was a faint smear of white. And the white smear was telling me all I had wanted to know. Piece by piece, the whole thing was fitting into shape now.

Schule glared down at Ralph Packer.

"Got no more than he deserved. Killed two people. You're damned lucky he didn't get you, too, Mr. Cook. Anyhow, the case is washed up. The murderer's dead, which'll save the State the cost of putting him in the chair."

"No," I said, looking at the streak

on Cook's sleeve. Whitewash, it was. "The murderer isn't dead. He's standing here now, jittering around about self defense."

"What are you talking about?" panted Cook, apparently recovering strength slowly from the battle for his life.

"You're screwy," snapped Schule. "We all saw how Packer was trying to stab Cook."

"Yeah?" I said. "For how long? For about a fifth of a second. Then Cook 'tripped' Packer and Packer fell back on his own knife. Obliging guy, Packer!"

Cook was staring at me with astonishment and a sort of patient injury in his eyes.

"I don't quite understand, Mr. Tevin," he said. "I was attacked by the man as though he had suddenly gone mad. I managed to beat him off, and we fell and he was killed by the very weapon he had meant to use on me."

"Interesting," I said. "But that doesn't explain the streak of whitewash on your sleeve."

**H**E LOOKED at his sleeve, with nothing but bewilderment in his face. Then stared questioningly at me again. It was damned well done.

"You were outside this room while the rest of us were in the kitchen," I charged him. "You brushed against one of these freshly whitewashed walls, outside."

"Your attitude is insulting and unwarranted, sir. I may have had this streak of white on my sleeve since I first arrived here."

"You may have," I cut him off, "but you didn't. It wasn't on there five minutes ago. Which means you went out within the last few minutes. Was it before you killed Packer, or afterward?"

"But my dear sir, you saw Packer killed—accidentally—a few seconds ago."

"We saw you dancing around with him. But we didn't see Packer killed," I shot out. "I thought there was something funny about the way his knees were buckling. *Packer was dead before he fell!* You'd have

had to kill him before you went out of the house or he'd have asked questions or raised an outcry. You put on an act with a dead man, Cook."

Cook turned to Schule. "Sheriff, is this man authorized to attack me in this absurd way?"

"No, he ain't," Schule growled. He switched his eyes to me. "Back out of this."

"Shut up," I told him. I returned to Cook. "There is something of value hidden around this property now belonging to Harriet Warner! As Rudolph Packer's lawyer you knew of it. You tried to kill Miss Warner so the house would be untenanted and you could steal it. She was lucky enough to escape your first attack down in the city. I stopped the second."

"We all came up here tonight. The first thing you were greeted with was an indication that old Strine knew the secret too, though he didn't know you were in on it. You killed Strine to shut him up. Arthur Fitch, you discovered, saw something to make him a little suspicious. Probably he saw you either enter or leave the kitchen just before the will was read. Sheriff Schule was going to question him a second time, because the first time Arthur Fitch had acted as if 'he had something on his mind.' You spiked that by racing to the garage when you saw him walk out onto the lawn, and getting a hammer with which you later killed him."

Cook was shaking his head, almost pityingly.

"And the pin that caused the short circuit?" he murmured. "That was found in the dining room. At the time it was dropping, I was lying in here unconscious."

"That's what you say. Actually, you weren't at all. You caused the short while you stood in the living room after the rest had run past you and out the door. Packer came out then and you put on an act for him, pretended to be attacked, and dropped—after carefully gashing your own head. Packer couldn't see you at the floor level in the dark,

and didn't see you crawl to the dark dining room, lock it from the inside and then attack Miss Warner once more after dropping the fused pin as a plant."

SCHULE was staring at Cook a little more uncertainly, now, and a little less angrily at me.

"You made up the silly yarn about seeing Strine in the yard to distract our attention so you could have one more chance to kill the inheritor of this house," I told the lawyer. "At the moment it seemed like a good idea. Later you began to realize that it might draw suspicion to you. So you planned a goat. You killed Packer while his back was turned. You ran out into the night, ran back in again, and put on the cockeyed act we caught a glimpse of as we ran here in answer to your yell."

"And why would I go outside the house at such a tense moment?" demanded Cook, with a sneer.

"Because of the thing of value hidden here which has been your motive from the first," I shot back. "Obviously this thing is somehow a part of the outside house wall, which explains the immaculate whitewash, put on carefully to cover the object. Now, it seems to me your anxiety to rush things, which led you to the terrific risk of doing murder while a law officer was right in the house, can only mean that this valuable thing is in danger of becoming visible. Maybe the whitewash is coming off from over it. I don't know. Yes, that's probably it. And you ran out after killing Packer to try to cover it up so you could have at least a few days more in which to get Miss Warner out of the way and steal it."

Cook sighed. "I should be very angry, young man. But I'm not, because fortunately you can't harass me with your insane theories. You all saw me fighting for my life with a man who attacked me for no reason, the man who is the real murderer. Schule at least will testify to that extent. So I think you are to be disregarded, Mr. Tevin."

Schule looked at the lawyer and then at me.

"Got any way to prove what you're spouting about?" he challenged me.

I grinned a little at that. I'd been angling for the question.

"The whole case," I said, "rests on the fact that there's something around this place which Miss Warner has inherited, that is worth a lot of money, and that Cook alone knows of it and has killed to get it. Right?"

"Yeah, or you're crazy," Schule grunted.

"Okay. Now, if we can go outside, find the part of the wall where Cook picked up that smear of whitewash, and discover something of value there, it would hang him, wouldn't it?"

"It's an idea," said Schule, striding for the door.

"Wait!" Cook cracked out. Schule and I turned. He had looked contemptuous before. Now he looked damned mad. His eyes were hard glitters in his face. The veins in his forehead stood out.

"I demand my rights, Sheriff. It may be remotely possible that this man has chanced to guess an amazing truth, that there is something valuable concealed here. But if that is so, it would prove not one thing!"

"The hell it wouldn't," said Schule. "Come on, Tevin."

We got to the door. Cook came after us. He moved fast for a man who had been hit in the head a little while before.

"I tell you, Sheriff—"

Schule ignored him. We moved down the wall. To the left; to the right. Cook came with us, talking, clutching first at Schule's arm and then at mine. Long before we came to the end of the search, Schule had glanced meaningly at the two deputies, who closed in behind the lawyer.

And to the right, near the corner of the house, we saw a discoloration in the gleaming whitewash. It was a little patch of dried mud no larger than a silver dollar.

I reached to scratch at the mud.



And Cook cracked. A scream like that of an animal came from his lips. He lunged toward the two deputies, then stopped.

I saw his face congest with the dreadful apoplexy of a stroke, and he fell—

Later that night we got back to the mud patch. We scraped it away, and some of the whitewash around it.

The Cape Cod cottage was constructed of brick. But right here was a slab of gold as thick as a brick and ten bricks in area! When the gold moratorium had gone into effect, Rudolph Packer had secretly bought some and cast it into this ponderous slab. He had put it there in the wall, which every one passing could see, but had ruled bricklines in it and had washed it over with whitewash with which he kept the cottage meticulously covered from then on. The only man besides Strine to know of it was Cook, who had been instructed to inform Harriet of its presence when, in future years, it was once more legal to own gold.

Cook had planned to kill Harriet so he could loot the gold from an uninhabited house. The sheer weight of the slab made it impossible for him to cart it off alone during a

normal short absence of hers or of Strine's.

When he had come in that night he had been horrified to see that a bit of whitewash had flaked off the glittering slab. And at the end of his murder spree he had rushed out to rub a skim of mud over the metal, getting the whitewash that damned him on his sleeve.

Harriet wanted to give me a tenth of the slab for my fee.

"Nothing doing," I said. "Why should I take a tenth when I've got a shot at the whole thing?"

"You think you have a chance at it?" she murmured.

"Why not?" I said. "You're pretty well fixed now. You need a detective in the family to watch over your interests, and keep you from being lonely out in this nice cottage."

She looked at me for a full minute. Swell eyes!

"It would serve you right if I took you seriously," she said, at last.

We were under the moon. I took her hand.

"Go on," I said, a little thickly, "serve me right."

I guess my voice told her how far I was from kidding.

Anyway—she did!

Next Month  
*A New* DR. FEATHER Story

By RAY CUMMINGS

—and Many Other Crime and Mystery Thrillers

The illustration depicts a man and a woman riding a large, cylindrical Tootsie Roll. The man is seated at the front, holding the reins, while the woman sits behind him. The roll is labeled 'Tootsie Rolls' and 'CHEWY AND DELICIOUS'. Above them, a speech bubble reads 'America's Favorite CHEWY CHOCOLATE CANDY'. To the right, a bird is shown holding a sign that says '1¢ and 5¢ rolls'. At the bottom of the roll, a seal states 'Approved by the Good Housekeeping Bureau'.

**OVER 200 MILLION TOOTSIE ROLLS SOLD LAST YEAR**

# HEAVENLY WEED



*His rifle spoke again and ripped off a splinter from the cross arm*

**Davis, Once a Ball Player, Makes a Headline Play  
When a Drug Combine Tries a Home Run!**

**By WESTMORELAND GRAY**

*Author of "Border Patrol," "Murder Gain," etc.*

**T**HE girl had been crying. There were no streaks on her face, for she had done a good job with her powderpuff. But her eyes were red; they were good eyes, too—wide and frank and deep blue.

Her ankles were slim, and that's a criterion with me. Faces run pretty much alike nowadays, what with facials and mudpacks and electric vibrators, but I never saw ankles like hers on anything but thoroughbreds.

Speck Chandler talked to her, his homely freckled face as kindly as the face of a bulldog can be. She was pulling at the finger-tips of her gloves, but she looked straight at us. It was up in our office in the Federal Building, which has on the frosted glass of the door:

**NARCOTIC SQUAD**

Agent in Charge, David T. Chandler

"My name is Julia Proctor," the girl said. "I live in Fenway, a hun-

dred miles south of here. It's—it's about my brother—my kid brother. He's just seventeen. I'm working in Fenway to send him to high school. We—we're orphans. Jimmy has been a brilliant student. Worked *too* hard I think. Then he got to where he'd come home in a hilarious mood. He'd laugh and sing—and say that the most ordinary things—like electric lights—were the most beautiful things in the world. And then it would only be a little while before he'd be sunk in the depths of despair—actually groveling in despondency."

She shuddered. "His grades fell off at school. He looked haggard, and kept wanting more money. It frightened me. I caught him smoking cigarettes—a brand I'd never heard of. So I watched him one day when school turned out. There was a swarthy man parked in a coupé about a block from school. Several boys went to his car, he slipped them something and they gave him money."

The girl's honest gaze was direct. "I—I don't want Jimmy to get into any trouble. But—but I want to break up this awful thing, whatever it is. I took this out of Jimmy's clothes."

**S**HE handed Speck a crumpled pack with a few cigarettes in it. It was labeled "Smokeys." Speck broke open one of the fags, riffled its contents in his palm, sniffed it; then handed the whole business to me. He took the girl's arm, steered her to the door.

"Will you wait in the lobby, Miss Proctor?" he said.

I left the office by a rear door. We have enough of a lab back there to lift and read fingerprints and enough of a file to check against the main ones. It all didn't take over three or four minutes.

A steely glint was in Speck's eyes when I returned to the office.

"Heavenly weed," I cracked.

"With its roots in hell," Speck finished. And neither of us smiled when we said it. Marijuana is no smiling matter.

"Four sets of prints on the pack," I said. "Probably the girl's, yours and the kid brother's. The other set is Honey Savoni's."

"That means Nick Dariant," Speck said. "Honey has always been a Dariant man—peddling everywhere, but working specially among high school kids—building up hellish business for the future." Speck's face was more like a bulldog's right then than ever.

The image of Nick Dariant was in my mind. Nick Dariant, the man we wanted; the Number One man on the division's list. A man with the figure of a marathon runner, the classic face of a screen lover—and a soul as black as the pit of hell.

He had taken a powder in Chicago when narcotic agents had closed in on his gang and hideout. He had done the same in Saint Louis. Ditto Los Angeles. A most slippery customer, Mr. Dariant. In those other places it had been hasheesh and bhang. Down here it was marijuana, probably the most insidious and hellish of them all. Wherever he operated, Nick Dariant had cleaned up a wad and left a few thousand wrecked lives behind him.

We'd had other evidence that Dariant was at work in our vicinity. Here in the city we had picked up and convicted half a dozen addicts and small time peddlers we knew were Dariant men—or women. We had nailed down the town pretty tight. That was why Dariant men were working in the smaller places, like Fenway. But we hadn't been able to learn where Dariant was, or how he was getting the stuff. We knew that he wasn't fooling around with window-boxes and back-yard gardens. He never operated on a two-bit scale.

"This is the best lead we've had, Dinkey Davis," Speck said. They call me Dinkey, maybe because I'm sort of short and squat, which had come in handy, because before I came into the division I was a flashy shortstop on a Class D baseball team with an ex-marine sergeant for a captain. He

gave me the name—and it had stuck ever since.

"I told Miss Proctor an agent would go to Fenway with her," Speck went on. "We may learn something from her brother. And besides, the girl may need protection; Dariant's hoods might be watching her. Dariant always works a big crew, and he's still got some of his old gang left. They're a mean bunch of rats."

"Protection for ladies," I said. "That's right up my alley." Maybe I was thinking about the girl's ankles. I put on my hat, and began to look around to see what I'd want to take with me.

Speck put a hand like a bunch of bananas in my face and pushed me back into my chair.

"No sentiment in this business," he growled. "I saw you looking at that girl. *I'm going.*"

I griped, but it didn't do any good. That "Agent-in-Charge" business means what it says.

"Phone Fanny for me," Speck said when he left with the girl a little later. "Tell her I'll be back on the train tonight about seven. If I don't make it I'll phone you."

One of the first rules of an agent is to keep in contact with his headquarters. That's to keep from getting out on a limb and then finding it sawed off behind you.

Speck didn't come in that night, and he didn't phone.

Fanny called me the next morning and said that Speck hadn't come in during the night. Of course she was scared; but Fanny is game and didn't show it, except for a little choke in her voice.

That day wasn't much fun for me. Fanny would phone about every two hours, the choke in her voice getting a little more noticeable each time. And no word came from Speck. I put in a call for him at Fenway, and couldn't get him. Then I put in a call for Julia Proctor, and I couldn't get her either.

"He'll surely be in tonight," Fanny

said bravely, the last time she called. "I'm having whitefish for dinner tonight—broiled the way Dave is crazy about. Come on out and eat with us."

We ate the whitefish alone—Fanny and I and the two kids. Speck didn't show up, and I'm afraid we didn't enjoy the dinner, good as it was. I sat around faking cheerfulness for a couple of hours, with the kids crawling over me and calling me "Uncle Dinkey." The boy is four and looks so much like Speck, it's spooky; the girl, six, looks like Fanny, which is plenty good-looking. It made my stomach go cold, those kids talking about their daddy and asking when he was coming home, and Fanny going kind of white every time Speck's name was mentioned.

When I left she went to the door with me. She kind of reached out, caught both my arms tight, and began to cry. I let her use my shoulder. I'm crazy about Fanny. She's swell people. I told her to keep her chin up—then I got out of there. I had to, or I'd have been blubbering, too. I got in my car and headed south.

FENWAY is a nice little town, with a Chamber of Commerce and all the trimmings. At one o'clock in the morning it was a blot of darkness with the exception of two blocks of street lights and the lights in front of the new courthouse. I got the directions to Julia Proctor's house from a bent and toothless old night watchman.

It was a pocket-size cottage with vines around it. It seemed to fit her all right—and verify my judgment on her ankles. It was dark, of course.

I walked around the cottage. And I didn't go clanking. I couldn't spot anything queer. Finally I went up and tried the front door. It was locked. I rang the bell, thinking it kind of foolish. I had a funny feeling down under my breastbone. Maybe I was sticking my neck out.

I was. The lock clicked, the door came open with a jerk, and the lights snapped on. I had yanked out my

service gun, but the man who opened the door had jumped to one side. The door slammed behind me and its spring lock clicked.

"Take it easy, copper," Honey Savoni said. "We was kinda expectin' you."

All I could see of Honey was one eye, half of a crooked nose, and half of his grinning gash of mouth. The rest of him was behind the casement of the doorway down the hall. But I saw what Honey had. It was a tommy-gun and it was pointed just about where I had recently experienced my funny feeling.

"We found out a long time ago," Honey cracked, "that Federal dicks run in pairs—like other snakes. All right, take him, Sailor!"

That's where Honey made his mistake. When they're going to take me, they ought not to let me know about it. I learned in Class D baseball how, all at the same time, to dodge pop-bottles from the visiting fans, fight the umps with one hand, and members of the visiting team with the other. I've often used that technique.

This time I dodged. The sap that Sailor Pringle swung down at me would have knocked me cold as a well-digger's foot. It didn't even do my shoulder any good, when I jerked my head aside. Sailor was the punk who had opened the door. He used to be a third-rate pug, before he got the killer's itch.

THE momentum of his blow threw Sailor onto my back, I let my gun slip, whipped my hands over the back of his neck, locked my fingers, hunched low and heaved up like a bucking burro. Honey didn't use the tommy-gun to open up my hide for two reasons—one was, in our tangle, Sailor Pringle was as likely to become a bloody corpse as me; the other was they didn't want a four-alarm bedlam in this quiet burg.

My heave did the work for Sailor. With a cry like a frightened guinea-hen, he went over my back and slammed down in front of me.

I didn't let him go to the floor. I

grabbed a new hold and held him up in front of me, his back to Honey and the artillery.

"Fire when ready, Honey," I yammered. "See if Sailor can take it!"

Sailor couldn't. He squirmed like a worm on a hot rock, bawling out for Honey not to shoot. But Sailor still had some of the stuff he had in the fight ring, and he began to fight back. And Honey Savoni was closing in—cautiously, because Honey likes himself—but closing in nevertheless. And the ruckus brought two more of the rats from the room off the hall.

I knew all of them. Not personally, of course. Their mugs were on file in the division. The last two were Skeet Fillmore, a thin-faced little rat with buckteeth, and Fats Googan, a beefy one with a tic that made his mouth twitch. All four were Nick Dariant trigger men. Both newcomers had rods, and Skeet's had a muffler on it. I figured when they got ready to kill me—and it looked like that time was coming on—Skeet would be delegated to do the job.

I was fighting nasty. My knee had found Sailor's groin, one fist in his face, and the other in his stomach, below the belt. Which doesn't mean that Sailor wasn't doing anything about it. My chin had found his fist three or four times—I lost count—and I was as groggy as a gob on shore leave. But Sailor was plenty sick, and I made a wild swing that caught him flush on the button and sent him reeling, staggering away to flounder blindly into the wall and slump down.

The others were right on me then, and I had to shake my head hard to keep the hallway itself from jumping up and down. I was thinking that a girl with nice ankles had let me in for this.

"Let me drop this copper!" Skeet Fillmore wheezed through his nose. His gun with the awkward-looking muffler was shoved against my teeth. He had been smoking up his own profits; I could smell the weed on his breath and see the ugly shine of his eyes.

How I did it, I don't know. Again the practice from dodging pop-bottles, I guess. Skeet just didn't pull the trigger fast enough. My hand slapped up, whacked against the gun. It coughed in my face, parted my hair neatly in the middle, and powder-burned my forehead.

I had sense enough to know that an automatic with that kind of a muffler had to be cocked between shots. While our misguided Mr. Fillmore was trying to do that, I hit him. The blow cracked like a cap-pistol and his head went way back. Skeet went over, sank flat on the floor, lay still.

**H**ONEY SAVONI was cursing fervently; he hit me over my ear with the muzzle of the tommy-gun. I slogged to my knees and couldn't get up.

Honey drew back for a finishing blow, but Fats Googan caught his arm.

Everything stopped in that hallway like a moving picture when the film breaks. Somebody was pounding on the door.

"Open up! Open up!"

"The law—the hick law!" Fats whispered hoarsely, his mouth jerking hard.

"Scram!" Honey cried.

They were leaving, and I couldn't get up. My elbows kept folding under my weight. Sailor Pringle was going, too, yawning behind them in a zigzag trail. Then a hefty body hit the front door and it cracked, heaving in a couple of big cops in Toonerville uniforms.

"Halt!" called one of the cops. He had a big, round face and he raised a big, heavy, black gun. But Sailor didn't halt, and the others were already through the back door of the hall.

The cops jumped over me and Skeet Fillmore on the floor and went rushing after them. Doors slammed and then the big guns started off. I heard Honey's tommy chattering, wild and devilish, out there. Then a car roared.

I was surprised to see the cops

come back in, both as good as new. Luck of the Irish, I guess.

"They got away," one said dolefully.

"What's all this?" the other demanded.

"I'm trying to find out," I mumbled, and managed to show them my badge.

"The watchman told us you asked the way to Miss Julia's," the red-faced one said. "We didn't like the looks of it this time of night, so we came out."

"I'm glad you did—you saved my life." One of the cops had a drink on him, and he offered it to me. It brought me around. They found surgical tape in the house and patched the places where I'd had the corners knocked off my skull.

I went over and took a look at Skeet Fillmore. He was dead. That's the trouble with a long-time addict. Life hangs by such a slender thread with them. A little sock and out goes his heart. And I was genuinely sorry, because a dead man can't talk.

They took Skeet's body away with them, and said they'd phone in an alarm to go on the short-wave.

I let it go at that. What I wanted, what the division wanted, was the hide of the devil behind all this—Nick Dariant. Honey Savoni wouldn't lead us to him as long as he was chased.

In the living room of Julia Proctor's cottage I flopped in an armchair and searched around. I started putting two and two together, and got a hatful of things I didn't like. The girl had been watched, just as Speck had guessed. Perhaps the kid brother had sung to Savoni. Then Speck had stepped into the buzz-saw, just as I had. The Savoni mob had taken him, the girl, and the boy, Jimmy. Where? They had come back to sit on the cottage like a hen on a nest of eggs. And, smart guy, I had walked into their parlor.

I went over the house with a fine-toothed comb. No soap. Back in the living room I searched around some more. Two demons were beating tin pans in my head.

Then I saw a book lying open, face down, on the mantle.

That book meant something. Savoni's mob would not have been reading *Oliver Twist*. Either Julia Proctor or Speck Chandler had left the volume there. If it was Speck, there'd be some message about it for me. I marked the place where the book was open and put it through an examination. At last I got it.

There were tiny indentations—such as might have been made by a fingernail—under certain letters of the reading matter. Grabbing a pencil, searching those faint marks out with acute care, I wrote down the letters.

*farmeightmilesnmilstead*

Farm eight miles north of Milstead! I could reconstruct what had happened here. The gang had held Speck here, probably waiting for a chance to move him out. He heard them talk, knew where they were going to take him. When they were not watching too closely he had left this message.

Milstead was seventy miles northwest of Fenway, a hamlet on the highway. I called Fanny by long distance, and told her I had a lead and was going right on after Speck. But I didn't tell her that Nick Dariant's favorite method was a spray of machine-gun bullets in the face and interment in a lime-pit.

AT noon the next day I was up a pole, literally. Lineman's climbing spikes were strapped to my legs, a safety-belt encircled my waist and the pole, and through binoculars I was studying a farm a quarter-mile away.

This wasn't the first pole I had climbed, nor the first farm I had studied through the glasses. There were a bunch of farms eight miles north of Milstead, and I hadn't passed up a bet. This one, at casual glance, looked like all others in the vicinity. But a big section at the rear of it was bordered on all sides by a thick *bois d'arc* hedge, and in

that section was growing a brand of cotton no cotton farmer would acknowledge. It was growing lush, thick, and broadcast instead of in rows. Under my glass, it had long, down-slanting ladyfinger leaves.

Mexican hemp—the marijuana plant! Here then was Nick Dariant's supply of the weed. Roughly, I calculated he had about half a million dollars worth of it on the stem, enough to ruin the lives of the population of a city!

About the time I had that thought, one of the glass insulators about eighteen inches from my face exploded. Chips of glass cut my face, a bullet screamed away like a banshee, and across from the big, modern two-story farmhouse came the sound of a gun.

I whipped my glasses that way and saw the figure of a man in one of the upper windows. His rifle winked again, and a long raw splinter ripped off the cross-arm to which I was holding.

Jerking my spikes free, wrapping arms about the pole, I began to slide down. The bullets followed me. They made ugly notches on the pole right at my face. One breezed through my clothes with a hot breath, scraping my hide at the waist. Other guns began booming closer—hoods in the *bois d'arc* hedge, who had been guarding the marijuana field. And I saw a car put out from the house. I was slipping as fast as I could without letting go entirely. I was about halfway down, when a bullet cut the safety-belt, and gravity did the job of getting me to the ground.

It was a shocking jar, but no bones broke. I got up running. The car was racing along a narrow lane and would be here in seconds. There were five men in it, and I saw a machine-gun poking out the rear window.

I was in timbered pasture land, ducking among bushes and low brush. And right there I pulled a little trick of psychology on them. I knew they'd expect me to run away from danger, so I ran toward it. My car was in the other direction, but I had brought up a carrying-case with my "equip-



ment" in it and cached it not far from my look-out pole.

Men had left the car and were running through the pasture. Honey Savoni had the machine-gun. Fats Googan had a thirty-shot Luger. The others were as well heeled. They were getting closer and closer. They were as wary as lynx-cats. Behind a bush I shed the lineman's doodads, stripping for speed!

"I'll bet the rat run the other way!" Fats cried out.

I tumbled into a shallow depression with some weeds along its sides. I scuttled along on all fours, going toward the lane, until I was just opposite the clump where my stuff was cached. But there was open space between it and me.

The chance had to be taken. I sprinted up and ran for it, putting on all my steam. Honey Savoni yelled. His tommy began its insane jabber. A heel was knocked from my shoe. I saw pieces of ground eaten away in front of me. That brush clump was the home plate and I slid into it like a runner in the last of the ninth with the score tied. Thorns clawed at me, but I hardly knew it. I grabbed up the carrying-case with my left hand and plunged out of the bushes on the other side.

Right across from me was the gang's car, parked in the lane. A hood was standing by it, on guard, with a big automatic in his hand. He had seen me coming, had his gun up.

My own was up, too. I shot him in the chest just as his gun went off and his bullet zipped by my head. That cured him permanently of the gang killer's favorite trick—shooting at his victim's face.

The motor of the car was still going, and Savoni's mad crew was still coming, like a pack of hounds. I pushed the dead man from the running board and leaped in, under the wheel. It was a big, heavy car with thick, non-shatterable glass—almost an armored car.

I made a tank out of that car. I didn't go back down the lane, because that way they would cut me off, literally rip the tires off of it with

their guns. I whirled the machine halfway around, and headed straight into a wire fence. Wires snapped like fiddle strings and I roared across rows of cotton, straight for the house. The machine cut through the plants like a scythe. While I drove with my left hand, I opened the case beside me with my right and took out the submachine-gun.

Guns opened up from the house. Spider webs appeared on the windshield. Bullets beat like sharp hammers on the body. And gun noises were driving me on from behind.

**I** RIPPED through another wire fence, hurdled a ditch and roared across a gravel lane that bordered the grounds of the house. Then I was facing a sturdy white paling fence. The car hit it with a crash, made a hole in it, slapped the fence to the ground for twenty feet on each side.

The grounds of the house were nicely landscaped with dwarf cedars and firs. The car took these in its stride, slicing down a tall, graceful Lombardy poplar for extra measure.

I couldn't stop and get out—it was raining lead and I had no umbrella! There was a tiled sun porch on this side of the house, just about level with the yard. I drove straight at it. It had two thick brick columns, but I gunned the machine to the floor; I thought I could drive between them. I did, but I left rear fenders behind.

Looking out on the sun porch was a big, wide cathedral window reaching to the floor. Again I gunned to the bottom, hit the window center. Glass, metal framework, mortar crashed around me like all hell.

There was a two-foot drop beyond the window and the car leaped in like some live devil from a hop-head's dream. There it came to a halt, astride a studio couch, with its nose hooked over a library table.

On the other side of the room was an open archway with double columns on each side of it. A man was behind the right side columns with the nose of a machine-gun poked be-

tween them, belching fire and death at me. The bedlam was hideous. I flopped down below the dash as the windshield was eaten away and fell in shards on my back. I wormed to the floor, with the gear lever pressing my stomach, and reached across to the handle of the right-hand door.

When it swung open, I went out with it, dragging the machine-gun. Glass shattered out of the door as the gunner spotted my move. But I crouched low behind the side of the hood, low enough to have the protection of the heavy metal of the motor, from which bullets were gonging like demons beating a triangle. More men had come down the stairs beyond the archway, their rods joining the hellish din.

I raised my tommy just above the engine hood, got a lightning bead between those two columns, squeezed trigger. The gun bucked and jumped in my hands. The man with the chopper neighed out like a stricken horse—once; then he and his gun disappeared from the niche.

The artillery on the stairs behind him backed up, beat a retreat, turning to flee the steps. They couldn't take it. Seeing their man die in a bloody mess like that broke their nerve. Maybe I sensed this—I don't know. I went on because I couldn't go back.

AS I hit the bottom step, the last of the rats above was quitting the landing. He tried to fire down on me. He wasn't fast enough. My spray of bullets carried away half his side, and he came tumbling down the stairs, a lump of dying flesh.

I was a little sick from the carnage, but I was a little crazy too. When I reached the top of the stairs I was cocked for more of it. But I came face to face with three thugs who had dropped their weapons and had their hands high.

It was pretty brutal. But I couldn't take a chance on their treachery, and I didn't have time to tie them up. I socked them—one, two, three—on the conk with the barrel of the tommy.

After I had kicked their weapons through the bannister to clatter down the stairs, I ran on down the corridor. Some one was shouting. I knew it was Speck Chandler, and my heart leaped high with joy.

A window was open at the end of the corridor and I looked out. The four men were running across the yard, skirting around a fish pond. Honey was in the lead, gripping his tommy-gun. I aimed my own at their feet, intending to plow up the ground in front of them as a warning. I triggered.

Nothing happened. The drum was empty! And I had left my service revolver in the wrecked car!

I didn't think—I might have wilted. I had to bluff it, take the chance.

"All right, Honey—all of you! Drop your guns and reach, or take lead on tender places!" I yelled.

To a man they looked up. Saw my chopper beaded on them. There was a motionless moment. I'll never forget their white faces, upturned toward me. That nerve in Fats' face jerking at the corner of his mouth; Honey's gash of a mouth, slack in surprise; the others blank.

Honey made a half gesture to raise his weapon, when Fats Googan babbled a curse and threw down his gun. Then Honey let go of his, and the others followed suit.

"Kick them in the fishpond!" I ordered.

They obeyed while I watched. Then I turned away. Their fangs were drawn; there is no danger in a gangster when his gun is gone. They might lam, but I knew they could be picked up as soon as I phoned in an alarm.

I listened now to Speck Chandler's shouting.

"Dinkey — Dinkey!" he yelled. "Look out for Nick!"

Nick Dariant! How I would look out for him! How I had craved to come face to face with him! Now good luck or bad luck with me, I would—and with a gun!

But I traced the sound of Speck's voice, ranged down from the corri-

dor. I spotted it behind the third door. The door was locked.

I lunged against the door and broke it open.

But no shots, bombs, or other forms of destruction greeted me. Instead I was looking into a very nicely furnished room where Speck Chandler, Julia Proctor, and her kid brother sat rigidly in chairs. They were taped to them like so many mummies. Nick Dariant was not in the room.

When I'd freed them, Speck sheepishly tried to say something appropriate; the girl was crying from reaction, and hugging her brother, who was a manly looking little chap after all. Then she was hugging me, and she kissed me!

I liked it all right, but I didn't want to go soft then.

**CUT IT!** I growled. "We've got to get Nick!"

We went out of the room, into the corridor. We kept together. I didn't tell Speck and the others my gun was empty. We tried doors. They were locked, and I was tired of crashing things.

Then a voice sounded from the other end of the long hallway.

"All right, G-coppers! You've ruined my hideout, busted my racket, haven't you? Take this from Nick Dariant as a little token!"

I whirled and saw Nick. Just a glimpse of him. His matinee idol figure, his Greek god face, eyes crazy now, classic features in a twisted cast of fury. Then he raised his right arm and threw with all his might—a bomb!

I saw that bomb coming on and on, growing bigger, for what seemed like hours. We were all huddled together at the end of the hallway—we couldn't run; we were hemmed in by walls and locked doors. It wasn't a standard bomb, but a hand-manufactured one, round and about the size of a baseball; it made me sick inside to think what that much high-explosive could do to us. It came on like a ground-liner, and I realized that it was going to hit

the floor and skim along to our very feet!

I must have thought I wasn't in that hall any more. I was on the baseball diamond, and maybe I could hear the fans yelling; what I'd gone through made me a little berserk. That bomb was a baseball, a fast ground-skinner coming at me red-hot from the smash of a bat, and I was racing to meet it, to pick it up. I caught it as it hit the floor. I didn't know until a long time later that a bone in my hand was cracked. My hand lashed up and I returned it, hot as it had come—putting all the steam I had on that return!

Nick Dariant saw it coming, but he seemed paralyzed, couldn't move. Then there was an awful growl of sound in our ears, the house shook, and Nick was blotted from sight by a jagged blast of flame. There was a hole in the wall, a hole in the floor, and plaster and lath ripped out and fell. And somewhere in that debris was what was left of Nick Dariant.

It was funny that I'd think right then of Speck Chandler's wife, waiting by the telephone, and the two kids who had crawled over me the night before asking about their daddy.

"You go phone Fanny, this minute, you big lug!" I said roughly to Speck.

Then I went blind as a bat and reeled over!

When I came to I was stretched out flat on a couch in one of the rooms, and the girl was bending over me. I could see her ankles and they were as trim as ever. I knew I'd been right about those ankles. I tried to grin.

"I'll give Jimmy a whipping down if I ever catch him smoking off-brand cigarettes again," I said. "How about a date tonight, lady?"

She bent closer, and maybe I'm crazy, but I thought there were tears in her eyes, and she seemed like she couldn't speak for a moment. And she kind of choked up when she spoke.

"What time shall I expect you, Mr. Davis?" she said.

# In the MURDERER'S

**I**N THE mid-forties of New York City, not far from Fifth Avenue, stands the huge building which houses the Scientific Crime Club.

The club's luxurious quarters are on the roof, far removed from the turmoil of busy city streets. There is a little garden of pebbled winding paths between flower beds and trellises, with a splashing fountain in its center.

One of the rooms has sliding walls and roof which in pleasant weather may be opened to the sky. And there are other rooms of luxurious leather lounging chairs, a little bar and restaurant with white-coated attendants.

Bridge and chess tables are here; a billiard room; a small bowling alley; a shooting gallery; a small gymnasium and pool.

Outwardly they are rooms for wealthy men at play.

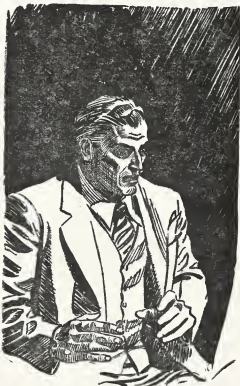
But some of them are very strangely equipped.

One is crowded with expensive devices of modern science; an electrical laboratory; a room equipped for research chemistry and physics. And there is a room which would seem to be a theatrical storehouse—scenery, props of every imaginable kind, ranged in an orderly litter. They are the club's equipment when it is at work.

No one, visiting the club for the first time, would think of it as more than a playground.

But the lighting effects of its rooms can be made extraordinary, for they have wiring as intricate as any theatrical stage.

There are ingenious secret panels in some of the walls; hidden traps in the floor and the roof—an amazing equipment which may not be used for a year but is always available



*"It's a lie!"*

## By RAY

*Author of "The Mental Giant,"*

for the scientific probing of the minds of suspected criminals who may be brought here.

The club members, largely, are wealthy professional men. Upon a warm summer night, a group of them were gathered in one of the lounging rooms.

Some club members were here by chance; others had been summoned as spectators and participants, in a case which just today had come before the club.

The services of the members—

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## Dr. Allaire Plumbs the Depths of a Killer's

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# BRAIN



*I didn't do it!"*

## KING

*"Condemned by Fate," etc.*

the resources of the club—have for years been at the disposal of the police, or any individual who cares to demand them.

The cases come at irregular intervals, generally from the police of New York City and its outlying districts—clueless affairs, usually, with definite suspects upon whom, by ordinary police methods, guilt would probably never be fastened.

The case, tonight, was typical. The Psychologist, lounging in his

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## *A Tale from the* SCIENTIFIC CRIME CLUB

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chair with his fellow members around him, was saying:

"It's a pathetic affair, gentlemen. The girl—she was only sixteen—killed herself last evening. And perhaps almost simultaneously, her father was murdered."

"How do you know she killed herself?" the Banker demanded. "Why not a double murder?"

"The facts are against it," the Psychologist said. "The thing happened in Maple Grove—just about this time last evening. Peter Mackenzie and his daughter, Alice. They lived in a small but very respectable lodging house. He was a widower—a glass blower in the Torrence Glass Works out there. And the girl kept house for him."

"SHE took poison, I understand," the Doctor interjected.

"Why?" asked the Very Young Man eagerly. "Was she a pretty girl, Dr. Allaire?"

"They say she was," the Psychologist answered. "An old-fashioned sort of girl. Her father brought her here from Scotland, just after she was born. The father was a man of fifty. You know the type—industrious, thrifty, squarely solid both in physical build and in character. A plain man, of doggedly high principles. And he brought his daughter up in just that fashion. They say the girl was dutiful, gentle, sweet—"

"And she killed herself," the Very Young Man sighed. "I wish I had known her. Maybe then—"

"At nine o'clock last evening," the Psychologist went on, "Peter Mackenzie is known to have gone out and left his daughter at home. They were both agitated—the landlady heard their voices, but nothing that they said. At ten o'clock she went up to see Alice. The girl was

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## Mind to Secure a Halting Confession!

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lying on her bed, unconscious from an overdose of sedative. She never recovered consciousness; she died at dawn today. And last night—at nine-thirty while the girl was ending her life—less than two miles away her father was being murdered."

"And there is a clear connection?" the Lawyer asked.

"There is indeed." The grey-haired, distinguished-looking Psychologist sat up in his chair, smoothing a crumpled bit of paper in his hand. "Here is the note she left—pathetic, simple words. He read:

Father darling— He doesn't love me, so why bother? I hope you tell him so. But even as much as I love you, I cannot live without him. Oh please forgive me—

THERE was a brief silence, the men staring at the Psychologist put the smudged, tear-stained bit of paper back into his pocket. Then the Lawyer said:

"It seems obvious that her father went to meet the man she loved."

"Exactly," the Psychologist agreed. "That inference is plain. They met. And the unknown man killed Mackenzie—on a bridge high over the Central Railroad tracks in the outskirts of Maple Grove. We have a witness to it. The 9.28 train for New York had just left the Maple Grove station.

"It wasn't going very fast when it reached the bridge. The engineer plainly saw two men high up there—the silhouettes of them. He saw the murderer shoving Mackenzie—and saw Mackenzie come hurtling down—striking, not the track on which the train was advancing, but the one adjacent. The fall killed him. The murderer perhaps had intended to throw him in front of the train—"

"If the engineer saw the murderer, what did he look like?" the Lawyer demanded.

"Just a bareheaded silhouette. No details. The silhouette of a man peering down; then running away. Now gentlemen, you can see easily why Marberry, of Maple Grove, re-

ferred the case to us. This man whom the little Alice loved more than her father or her life—only she and her father knew his identity. And there you have the murder motive. This stern old Scotchman, meeting this man—"

"The murderer felt that he could control the girl?" the Astronomer suggested.

"Or perhaps he would have murdered her later," the Psychologist said. "Her suicide saved him the trouble. The case, gentlemen, by inference, is extraordinarily simple. But that, indeed, is exactly why the police are balked. There are no tangible clues. Nothing but inference—an assumption of what happened and why it happened."

"Which wouldn't get very far before a jury," the Lawyer interjected. "Defense counsel would knock that sort of evidence into a cocked hat."

"Exactly," the Psychologist agreed. "We have the suspects—and nothing else. It wasn't hard, even in a few short hours today, for Marberry to locate the possible men for whom Alice Mackenzie could have had this attachment.

"There are only two. A young fellow named George Bolton who works in an office here in New York; and a rich widower of thirty—an ex-actor named Thomas Dale, who was fortunate in a mining speculation and now has retired from business. Both were seen frequently in the girl's company—old Mackenzie seemed to like them both."

"And where were they last evening?" the Lawyer demanded.

The Psychologist smiled wryly.

"Marberry has been grilling them all day. Young Bolton was in his Maple Grove boarding house room—on the ground floor so that he could easily have gone in and out the window without attracting attention. Thomas Dale was alone in his Maple Grove apartment, with a private entrance to the street so that no one but himself can say whether he was there all evening or not."

"And it's up to us to make the choice," the Very Young Man ex-

claimed. "But how in the devil—"

"I've sent for them," the Psychologist said. "They'll be here any minute. Now gentlemen, there is little for you to do—most of it negative. You may hear, for instance, a queer grinding, clicking noise. Ignore it! Pretend it does not exist. I want the murderer perhaps to think he is imagining it."

The Psychologist's lean, sensitive face was grim now as he added:

"The guilt is in the brain of one of these two men. I'm going to drag it out—without him knowing it."

A club attendant appeared at the door of the room. "George Bolton is here to see Dr. Allaire."

"Send him in." The Psychologist stood up. "The idea is, gentlemen," he added hurriedly, "I've told both these suspects that a wealthy, eccentric criminologist is interested in the case—that he is convinced they are both innocent—has hired me scientifically to demonstrate it. Whether they believe that or not is immaterial. Neither dared refuse to come. So you gentlemen act with the assumption of sympathy. An experiment in applied psychology—to prove innocence, not guilt. And we will—"

GEORGE BOLTON entered the room and stood staring, surprised, confused by the number of men all of whom were gazing at him intently. He was a tall, blond, broad-shouldered, very handsome young fellow, dressed in a neat dark business suit.

"Dr.—Allaire?" he said hesitantly.

"I am Dr. Allaire," the Psychologist said. He indicated a chair. "Sit down, please. Thank you for coming, Mr. Bolton."

The young man smiled. "Oh—how do you do? I thought I'd gotten into the wrong room."

"These gentlemen are my fellow club members," the Psychologist explained. "I need not introduce them by name. Gentlemen, this is Mr. Bolton. The police seem to think he might be guilty of the crime I've been describing to you."

Young Bolton smiled nervously at

the men as he sat down. "The police have been pretty tough on me all day. What is it you want of me, Dr. Allaire? Lord knows I've already told—"

Again the attendant appeared. "Mr. Thomas Dale is here, Dr. Allaire."

"Send him in, Arthur."

At the name, young Bolton had leaped to his feet. "Dale? Why you didn't tell me—what is this, some more inquisition?"

"No," the Psychologist smiled. "Quite the reverse. Sit down, Mr. Bolton. The police told me that was one of your troubles—you're too impetuous. If I can prove your innocence, you'll be free of the police. Don't you understand? As things are, they can't prove a thing but they'll hound you, trying and hoping—"

But the young man wasn't listening. With flushed face, he stared at the door where now Thomas Dale stood calmly surveying the room.

"Dr. Allaire?"

"I am Dr. Allaire. Come in, Mr. Dale."

The Psychologist introduced the club members. The second suspect was an extreme contrast to young Bolton—a man of thirty, short but powerfully built. His dark hair was thinning at the temples. His smooth-shaven face of rugged features, was somewhat pale. He had been an actor, and it showed now in the self-possession with which he acknowledged the introductions. And then his quiet gaze landed upon Bolton who was standing with clenched fists.

"How do you do, Bolton?" he said. "I didn't know you had been invited here. Where do you want me to sit, Dr. Allaire?"

Certainly there was no love lost between the two men. The Psychologist placed them in small chairs, side by side. They were diagonally facing the intent group of club members, with the Psychologist standing before them.

"I owe you both an explanation," he began quietly. "I have been commissioned to try and produce some



evidence that will persuade the police to let you alone. My client is aware that there is no evidence against either of you—"

"Who is your client?" Bolton asked. "Is he here? No one is interested in me—"

"I am not at liberty to name him," the Psychologist said. "Perhaps it is myself? Why not? I am interested—well, to be frank, if not in you two, certainly in applied psychology."

He smiled at the two men, who now were staring at him with an almost breathless intentness. And it was obvious that both of them considered his words as a preface to some new questioning with the same purpose the police had had all day.

One was guilty? One innocent? No choice could be made from their outward aspect. Wholly different types, they had balked the police: young Bolton with an impetuous angry flush, or grim sullenness; and Thomas Dale with a seemingly quiet desire to give all the information he could, and an imperturbable self-possession.

"It is not my purpose to question you," the Psychologist went on. "A man—as the police have told you—was seen killing Peter Mackenzie. Unfortunately the witness cannot describe that man. It could have been either of you—or anyone of a thousand other men—"

"Which is very hard on us," Dale said.

"It is indeed. I quite agree with you. To come to the point—I have invited these gentlemen here as witnesses to an experiment in psychology—Wait a minute, Mr. Bolton—don't interrupt me, please. You are both innocent—you have told the police so. And both of you know by now, very well indeed, that there is not a particle of evidence against either one of you—"

He paused, and then he abruptly added:

"You don't know, do you, anything of what happened between Mackenzie and his murderer on that bridge?"

"I do not," Bolton said.

"How could I?" Dale said.

"My idea is, to tell you what happened," the Psychologist continued. He smiled faintly. "Not that I know what happened, because I don't. But what I tell you, I want you to remember. Will you try?"

"I don't understand—" Dale began. Then both he and Bolton nodded dubiously. The watching men could not miss the fact that both were frightened. But still there could be no choice: a guilty man, afraid of exposure—but an innocent man would also be afraid that by some mischance he would be incriminated.

"Yes," they both said. And Dale added, "I'll try my best to do whatever you suggest."

"Thanks."

An abrupt tenseness seemed to come to the room as the Psychologist took a folded sheet of paper from his pocket, and adjusted his glasses.

"I have here some notes I made on what probably happened up there on the bridge. I am going to read them to you—I want you to listen carefully. The theory is—into your empty mind I am going to put these facts. They are quite simple. I want you to engrave them there in your brain."

HE stared at the flushed young Bolton and the pale Thomas Dale. Perhaps one of them now had a wild desire to withdraw, but if so, he did not dare show it.

"Are you ready?" the Psychologist added quietly.

Again they both nodded. Very slowly, with careful but drab intonation which emphasized no word, the Psychologist read:

"The murderer led his victim onto the bridge. They talked in the moonlight about Alice. They were angry. The murderer said, 'I never made love to her.' Then they sat on the bench by the rail and the victim said, 'But it is not like my child. You cannot make me believe it.' The victim was toying with a blue cap in his hand. Then a mo-

ment later the murderer pushed him over the rail. He fell to the railroad track and lay crumpled between the gleaming rails with the moonlight bathing him."

The room was heavily silent as the Psychologist paused. And looking up from his notes, he added:

"That's clear, isn't it? I want you to memorize it, not necessarily word for word, but the exact sense of it. I'll read it again."

Even more slowly, more drably than before, he repeated it. And then at once added:

"You, Jack Bruce—"

From across the room the Very Young Man looked startled.

"Yes, sir?"

"Just beyond that door—" the Psychologist gestured, "I put a small table with some articles on it. Bring it in, will you please? Carefully, Jack—"

The Very Young Man hastened to obey, and came back at once from the adjoining room dragging a small square table with a group of miscellaneous articles spread upon it.

"Here you are, Dr. Allaire."

"Thanks, Jack."

The Psychologist drew the table before young Bolton and Thomas Dale who stared at it silently. Without speaking, the Psychologist touched a switch. The roomlights faded. Shadows enveloped all the intent men, and from the ceiling a narrow white beam of light came down to illumine the table with the objects lying there fully revealed in the white glare.

The Psychologist was in the shadow. Close at the edge of the circle of white illumination young Bolton and Dale sat staring, fascinated. There were perhaps twenty objects arranged on the table. They were all commonplace, seemingly without any relation to each other: Dr. Allaire's personal card; an envelope and letterhead of the Scientific Crime Club; a man's brown felt hat and gloves; a silver-headed cane; an old battered doll; a blue knitted little cape; a few coins—

From the shadows, the Psychologist said quietly: "My idea is to put

into your mind a knowledge of these things, almost all of which are wholly unrelated to the crime."

"That was Alice's doll," young Bolton said abruptly.

"Yes," Dale agreed. "I've seen it. She said she had it most of her life—she treasured it."

"I have no purpose of trying to find out which of them you recognize," the Psychologist said. "That is—quite—"

He let his voice trail away; and in the silence of the shadowed room now, a very faint sound was audible. A low grinding, clinking sound. It was muffled—indescribably queer. It lasted no more than five seconds.

In the darkness someone shifted his feet as though startled. Dale and Bolton both murmured something, but the Psychologist's voice had only stopped for those five seconds, and now he was talking again:

"The things on that table have no relation to each other—" He moved forward into the white glare and shoved the table away. "Forget them. I want you only to remember what happened on the bridge between the victim and the murderer. I read it to you twice—"

FROM his pocket he took two pencils and two small pads of writing paper, and handed them to young Bolton and Dale.

"You can scribble in the darkness," he said. "And neither can see what the other is writing. Put your name at the top—and then write your memory of what I read you."

"Well—" Dale murmured.

"I may get it wrong," Bolton said.

"Do your best."

Neither of them wrote hastily. It was several minutes before they had finished.

"Here you are," Bolton said. Dale handed his silently.

The Psychologist took the two scrawled papers. In the silence of the shadowed room several of the men tensely shifted themselves in their chairs. Thomas Dale and young Bolton were dim blobs in

the gloom. At the circle of white glare, beating down on the floor now where the table had been, the Psychologist stood in shadow.

FOR a moment he silently read what the two men had written.

"This is very interesting, gentlemen." There was just a hint of emotion vibrating in his voice. "A comparison of these two little essays with my original will interest you all very much indeed. To refresh your memories. I'll read you again my exact, original words which Mr. Bolton and Mr. Dale attempted to reproduce."

"I can't be sure—" Dale murmured out of the darkness.

"Don't interrupt me now, please," the Psychologist retorted sharply. He was holding his original paper into the light. "Here was what I asked them to reproduce:

"The murderer led his victim onto the bridge. They talked in the moonlight about Alice. They were angry. The murderer said: 'I never made love to her.' They then sat on the bench by the rail and the victim said, 'But it is not like my child. You cannot make me believe it.' The victim was toying with a blue cap in his hand. Then a moment later the murderer pushed him over the rail. He fell to the railroad track and lay crumpled between the gleaming rails with the moonlight bathing him."

"There is the original. Now here is what one of them wrote. Analyze it carefully gentlemen.

"The murderer took his victim to the bridge. They stood in the starlight and they talked angrily about Alice. The murderer said, 'I did not ever make love to her.' They were sitting by the rail and Mackenzie said, 'My child is not like that. I don't believe it.' He was toying with something blue in his hand. Then suddenly the murderer shoved him over the rail. He fell and lay crumpled on the gleaming railroad track bathed by the starlight."

From the darkness of the intent room, as the Psychologist paused, came the Lawyer's voice.

"He seems to have made several errors, Dr. Allaire, but I don't exactly see what—"

"Let me analyze them for you. Please be quiet, you two—no apologies are necessary for your errors. This writer says starlight instead of moonlight. He says they were sitting by the rail. I mentioned that they sat on the bench by the rail. He says Mackenzie was toying with something blue in his hand. I said it was a blue cap, but he evidently forgot that."

The Psychologist was talking swiftly now. "So much for that one, gentlemen. Now I'll read you the other.

"The murderer and his victim went out onto the bridge. It was moonlight and they talked about the girl and the murderer said, 'But I did not ever make love to her.' They were sitting on the box by the rail. Mackenzie was toying with a blue cape in his hand and the murderer said, 'It is not my child—you cannot make me believe it.' Then the murderer pushed him through the rail and he fell to the track with the gleaming headlight bathing him'."

A startled gasp had come from several of the men in the darkness. "Gentlemen," the Psychologist added, "which is the guilty version?"

"That one!" Several of them chorused it.

"No question of it," the Psychologist said crisply. "Lights, Marberry please."

A glare of lights sprang in the room. Thomas Dale was sitting pale, intent, awestruck. Young George Bolton was on his feet, flushed, trembling, with a hand flung before his eyes in the glare.

"It's a lie!" he cried. "I didn't do it! I didn't mean to write those things. I don't know what possessed me—"

"The guilt in your brain possessed you," the Psychologist said ironically. "There's your man, Marberry."

From the doorway the bulky uniformed police sergeant sprang for-

ward, gripping the terrified Bolton. "So they got you—an' I couldn't! Come on—out with it—you can't lie out of this."

"I can—I mean there isn't anything to lie out of. You take your hands off me!"

"I found out more about him this afternoon," the Sergeant said. "He's been making love to an heiress over in Pleasant Hills. I located her—dragged it out of her."

"That's a lie!" Bolton stood struggling in the Sergeant's grip.

"Oh, is it?" Marberry said. "Well you'll get a chance to tell her that before the D. A."

Then Bolton suddenly broke. "All right, I did it. You let me alone, I tell you. Stop torturing me—all of you—let me alone. Gloria's right—I am engaged to her—her father knows it—"

"And poor little Alice Mackenzie with her coming child, and her dogged, outraged father—they were the obstacles," the Psychologist said. "A murder motive as old as history. And despicable beyond most murder motives. Take him away, Marberry."

AND when the room had quieted, the Psychologist said:

"That was a very simple psychological test, gentlemen—and one that is almost infallible. A true and a false memory cannot be distinguished by the mind. Bolton undoubtedly knew he had a dangerous problem. Whatever guilty facts I had mentioned, he also must mention. To have ignored guilty facts would have been a confession that he recognized them as guilty."

"Dale had no guilty memories at all to confuse him. He had no problem except to try and remember what I had read. He said starlight—got it mixed with moonlight. It generally is mixed on a clear night. He forgot the blue cap—just remembered something blue. He forgot the bench on which they were sitting. That was reasonable. A bench is unusual on a bridge. As a matter of fact, there is no bench on that bridge."

"I wanted to make sure of refreshing the guilty memories in this murderer's mind, and confusing those guilty memories with the memory of what I had read. You recall that faint, mysterious clanking sound a while ago, which we all ignored! It meant nothing to the innocent Thomas Dale."

"It was my simulation—in an adjoining room here—of the sound of the gears shifting the railroad semaphore signals which are on the bridge. We knew the murderer must have heard those gears shift as the train approached. They make quite a racket, and he and Mackenzie were sitting on the gear box."

"And the articles on that table," the Psychologist continued, "most of them were meaningless. To the innocent Dale, that little blue cape lying beside Alice's doll probably looked like a doll cape. But to the murderer it was a little garment for the coming baby. Mackenzie had it in his hand—they found it still clutched in his dead fingers. Evidently he had brought it to appeal to this seducer."

"Bolton recognized it on the table. And when I said blue cap—Mackenzie owned no blue cap—it was almost inevitable that Bolton should confuse the memories and think that I said blue cape. And he was the only one who knew of the coming child. The autopsy showed it, but the fact was never mentioned."

"He garbled my sentences on that point—got my words almost all correct—but out came his guilty knowledge of the child when I had said something wholly different! And Mackenzie was pushed *through* the rail, not over it! And in the deep railroad cut, the moonlight did not penetrate. Bolton—staring down at his victim—had an inescapable memory of the body, bathed not by moonlight, but by the headlight of the advancing train!"

"Guilty memories, gentlemen, are the murderer's greatest danger. It's almost impossible for him to hide them—if you dig for them in scientific fashion."

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## Ken Boyce Burns the Road for Easy

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*The revolvers blasted lead*

### A Complete Novelette

# MURDER

#### CHAPTER I

##### A CRASH

**I**T WAS like seeing a traffic cop in the middle of a South African veldt.

Ken Boyce felt like that. He told himself anyone would feel like that seeing him strolling along this serene country highway. He didn't belong on this highway any more than the cop belonged on the veldt. He didn't fit in with the fenced-in pastures, the blotches of green woods and cultivated fields that rolled in

gentle swells for miles on either side of the road. He didn't fit in with the specks of white that were the distant farmhouses and only signs of civilization in the countryside.

There was nothing rural about Ken Boyce. The smart snap-brim, the impeccable pin-striped grey flannel suit that clung trimly to his tall, well knitted frame suggested Park Avenue, extravagant tips to taxi drivers and expensive hotels. The .38 Colt automatic in the holster under his left shoulder suggested business.

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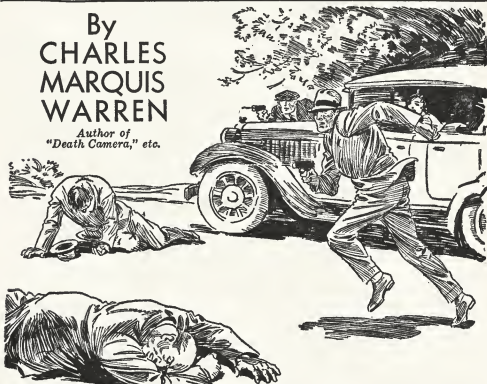
## An Insurance Detective Tries for a Long

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# Money Heels Who Infest the Highways!

By  
**CHARLES  
MARQUIS  
WARREN**

*Author of  
"Death Camera," etc.*



*across the open road*

# INSURANCE

There was the sound of a car coming from behind. Boyce turned eagerly to meet it, started to hoist his thumb after the inveterate manner of a hitch-hiker. Muttering in disgust he dropped his thumb and let the car go by without hailing it. It was a rattletrap Model T with a corpulent, red-faced farmer sitting rigidly behind the wheel.

Boyce cursed softly. There wasn't any use bumming a ride from that kind of a setup. He wanted the bigger cars that looked expensive to operate. The guy who drove that

kind would have dough, and if he'd made his dough anywhere around this hick district he'd just be sucker enough and soft enough to pick up a stranger. Especially when the stranger didn't look like a bum.

Still swearing softly, he stamped his feet on the macadam of the highway to get the dust off his shoes. Ken Boyce prided himself on his ability to dress. It was his weakness. He liked expensive clothes and he liked expensive shoes. These shoes, for instance, these custom-made, full-brogued shoes had cost

## Shot—and Gets a Swell Close-Up!

him forty-five bucks. There was only one shop in New York that sold them, an ultra smart shop that he cheerfully frequented whenever he had any money and could buy good shoes.

He cursed the quiet serenity of the countryside. It got on his nerves. He cursed the fact that he'd spent two of his last twelve bucks for bus fare to this hell-forsaken farm district. He ought to have known better than to attempt a job like this on his own. When he'd climbed out of the bus three or four miles back at some jerk-water little burg, he should have turned around and gone back to New York instead of hiking down this placid, deserted highway.

Hell, he wasn't even sure that this was the right spot. It was just a wild surmise he'd had, picking this spot. The racket had worked once before here and he saw no reason why it wouldn't work again.

HE heard the sound of another car behind him. If it weren't for the fact that he had ten bucks between him and a vacuum stomach, and the fact that he was in bad with Kelly because big shot Ace Daggert had put another one over on him and monopolized every racket—hell, if it weren't for Daggert, Ken Boyce knew he'd never even have attempted this long-shot job.

Boyce had to admire Daggert, because the big-time racketeer was a dresser like himself. He liked expensive clothes too, had earned his nick-name "Ace" because of his extravagant taste. But Daggert was a racketeer and a killer, and he had put one over on Boyce for the last time. That was the reason Kelly had fired him. And Boyce had figured if he'd go off on his own and pull a job like this successfully, maybe Kelly would reinstate him. Because this was a job that none of Kelly's boys had been able to pull off.

The car rushed abreast of him. Boyce turned languidly, then his heart skipped a few strokes. This was the kind of car he'd been waiting for! He jerked up his thumb.

"Hey!" he yelled. "Going my way?"

The big, expensive-looking sedan flashed by him. Then he heard the sound of brakes, and tires skidding on the macadam. The sedan pulled to a stop twenty yards in front of him and he could see the driver turn around and beckon to him through the window in the rear.

Boyce ran to the car, took time hastily to brush his immaculate suit before he opened the door to the front seat.

"Many thanks," he smiled. "I thought I'd never get a lift."

The man at the steering wheel grinned good-naturedly.

"Get in," he said. "I'm going as far as Elmsdale. I been home eating lunch and I reckon Mary took too long to feed me. I got to get back to the bank. I'm president of the bank. Finest bank in Elmsdale. Only bank in Elmsdale. We're mighty proud of it. Get in, friend. Get in."

Boyce smiled at the typical loquacity of the obvious small town citizen. And yet—and his smile was a trifle grim—a banker would be an ideal setup for the job. He couldn't have struck it better or luckier.

He got in beside the rotund, jovial-faced little man, and the banker started the car again.

"My name's Herbert Knox," the little man said. "What you doing hiking this highway, friend? You look like a city feller. You look like those pictures in the fashion magazines. You look like you could afford an airplane 'stead of hoofing it."

Boyce ignored the man's affable curiosity. He kept his eyes on the road as though searching intently for something.

"You pick up strangers like this very often?" he said.

Knox laughed. "I give everybody a lift, friend. That's why people keep their money in my bank. I trust everybody and they trust me."

"But I'm a stranger. I might pull a gun on you and frisk you for everything you've got."

Knox winked out of the corner of his eye.



"Not you," he laughed. "You don't need money. Not with those classy duds. Now if you looked like a bum I'd never stopped and picked you up."

Boyce nodded, eyes still searching the road. It was no wonder, he thought, the racket had worked in this part of the country before. People around here were real people, honest farmers. They were guileless. And this racket was ingenious, it had worked on far more sophisticated people than farmers. It was a cinch. And if Ken Boyce could get into it, then Kelly would give him another chance—and another chance to get in with Ace Daggert.

Boyce suddenly started, sat up right in the seat.

Knox whistled, said softly: "I'll be darned!"

On the right side of the road, facing their oncoming car, her thumb asking for a lift, was a feminine hitch-hiker. But like Ken Boyce, she wasn't an ordinary hitch-hiker. She was slim and from that distance, beautiful. Her modish sport suit had come from a fashionably expensive designer in some large city. She looked like a raven-haired heiress out for a stroll.

"I got to stop for that girl," Knox said, smiling and jamming on the brakes. "She's a lulu. She looks like your class, Mister. Some pumpkin! Wonder why she wants a ride?"

He backed the car until it came to a stop beside the girl.

"Going my way, ma'am?" he asked, smiling. "Glad to give you a lift far as Elmsdale."

Boyce saw that her clothes were not imitation. They were the real thing. He appreciated that. He appreciated the brown eyes with an iridescent touch of violet in them, the small pert nose and the firm red lips which smiled a little hesitantly as she climbed into the back seat.

One thing struck him singularly; something about her eyes, the way she held her lips, indicated that she was nervous and tense. More than that, she was distraught and afraid, though she tried to conceal it.

As the car started, Boyce threw his left arm around the back of the seat, half turned and said:

"You're a long way from home, aren't you?"

She smiled quickly at him.

"Yes I am—a little."

"New York?"

She hesitated a moment, then said: "Yes."

"Now you take New York," Knox began. "I only been to it once, but—"

BOYCE'S even tones interrupted him as he addressed the girl.

"Did you run out of gas or something?"

"I—I'm going home," she said. "I was in a show in New York and it closed. I couldn't get anything else to do so I started home. I came as far as I could on the bus before I—before I ran out of money. There was nothing else to do and I thought perhaps I could catch rides."

"Say, now!" Knox began again sympathetically. "That's mighty tough."

But again Boyce cut him short.

"Where is your home?"

"In—in Maryland."

"That's going to be a long walk if you don't catch a good many long rides."

"Yes. Yes, but it's the only thing I can do."

Boyce watched her. She was biting her delicate underlip. He knew she was lying. She had answered him as though she were reciting lines that someone had forced her to memorize. But he liked her. She was beautiful, but she had a lot more than just beauty—and she was deathly afraid.

He knew busses ran only twice a day through this part of New Jersey. And she hadn't been on his bus. If she'd come on the one early that morning it had taken her an awfully long time to walk this far.

But he liked her. He liked the way her eyes seemed to reach out to him and appeal in a mutely ashamed way for help. For some reason he knew he'd help her just as he knew she was trying her ut-

most to be honest with him and was afraid to be.

Knox started to say something over his shoulder as he gave the car more gas. And then he uttered an alarmed cry and the car jolted and swerved violently as he applied the brakes with all his strength.

Ken Boyce swung around and his eyes widened. Instinctively he stiffened his legs against the floor-board as a futile shock absorber. He heard the girl gasp with a frightened intake of breath that ended in a little sob.

Knox had been doing close to fifty. They were going through a section of the road that was bordered by a green woods on each side. Directly ahead was a little cross-road that was concealed on both sides of the highway by the trees. A conscientious but inconsiderate State Highway commissioner had placed a "Stop" sign on the highway so that, like in so many countryside counties, the insignificant little cross-road traffic had the right of way!

**S**HOOTING out from this intersection was a disreputable touring car, the driver taking his time, as though unaware of the head-on collision!

Knox had his brakes down to the floor, but the car shrieked as its impetus carried it skidding forward. They were going to smash and it seemed nothing could prevent it.

Boyce heard Knox's frightened squeal, he heard the whimper of the girl behind him. He couldn't close his eyes. Dread of the inevitable crash looming in front kept them wide open, staring. It enabled him to see the sudden, expert maneuver by the other driver at the last split second. The man sent his car leaping ahead so that his left rear fender was torn away by Knox's left front fender. That, apparently, was the only damage done.

Knox managed to bring his car to a stop fifteen yards down the road. For a moment he was too frightened to move. Boyce glanced back quickly to see if the girl was

all right. Her face was white but otherwise she appeared to be unhurt.

"Better back up," he said quietly to Knox. "The other fellow is getting out of his car."

There was a strange expression on Ken Boyce's lean face; an odd triumph was there and disappointment, too. The disappointment registered plainly when he shot the girl another quick glance.

Knox backed the car and he and Boyce got out. The man coming toward them was a brute of a fellow, with barrel chest and long, thick arms and legs. There was an ugly expression on his face as he towered over Knox.

"Look what you done, squirt!" he said succinctly. "Tore the fender off my buggy. An' you mighta killed me if I hadn't done some quick thinkin'."

"Your thinking was a little *too* quick, wasn't it?" Boyce asked quietly. "Sort of as if you knew exactly what you were doing."

The man whirled on Boyce.

"You keep outa this. This little squirt damn near killed me. He busted up my car. I guess he must be blind, or else he didn't pay no attention to that 'Stop' sign."

Knox was frightened but he made a commendable effort to draw himself up.

"Listen, Mister. I been drivin' this here road for forty—"

"Never mind what you been doing. You wrecked my car an' any court'll award me any damages I ask. Got that? But I'll be soft on you an' take a hundred bucks an' call it square. Understand?"

Knox suddenly put his hand in his pocket and drew out some bills.

"I'll give you fifty, friend. And that's too darned much."

"A hundred, squirt. Or I'll collect plenty in court and you'll collect a sentence."

Knox's florid face went redder.

"I got a reputation to think of," he said slowly. "I'm a bank president. I don't want any scandal. Here's your hundred. Now go away and—"

"Okay, squirt," the man said, taking the money. "Never mind the orders. You're lucky to get off this easy."

## CHAPTER II

### HITCH-HIKER'S RACKET



**K**EN BOYCE had walked over to Knox's car. He watched while the girl got shakily out of the car. She refused his proffered arm of assistance. She leaned against the car, rubbing her forehead with her hand.

"My head," she murmured. "It's my head."

"You were okay a minute ago," Boyce said callously.

She glanced at him sharply; for a moment there was panic in her eyes. Then she began rubbing her head again.

"Something's happened to my head," she said. "I must have hit it against the front seat when we stopped so suddenly. It hurts." Her voice trailed off in a bewildered, dazed way.

"What's your name?" Boyce said abruptly.

He knew she answered spontaneously, before she had any time to think.

"Adelaide Page." Then she realized she had been trapped and she tried quickly to cover up. "No. No, that's not my real name. I use that sometimes on the stage. My name's—Joan Brown."

"Why," asked Boyce sardonically, "do people always say Brown or Smith when they're lying about their names. I guess it's the first thing comes into their heads."

"That—that's my name." She had been fumbling with her handbag. She took out a pencil and paper, called to Knox to come over. The little banker left his argument with the big man, came over.

"What's your name?" Adelaide Page said.

"I'm Herbert Knox. Sorry if I've caused you—"

"Let me see your license, Mr. Knox."

Eyeing her with a puzzled expression, the little man took out his wallet. She copied the details of his license on her paper.

"You'll hear from me—through my lawyer, Mr. Knox," she said.

Knox gaped at her. "Why—why I don't see—" he stuttered.

The girl, Boyce saw, was making a desperate attempt to keep the fright out of her voice, keep it slow and steady, but it faltered a little.

"Mr. Knox, there is a law"—she sounded as though she were reciting again and hated to do it—"there is a law that makes the owner and driver of a car responsible for any person he is carrying with him. No matter who it is. If that passenger is in any way injured the driver is responsible and liable to a damage suit. I have hurt my head. How badly I don't know. But I am going to sue you for exactly one hundred thousand dollars."

"But—but," spluttered Knox, "it wasn't my fault. This man—"

"This man"—she nodded to the driver of the other car—"will be a witness to the fact that I was injured while you were taking his right of way and smashing his car."

Ken Boyce looked at her. The entire setup was one of the neatest rackets he had ever heard of. This was what he had been expecting. She had Knox dead to rights, and the big man would be her witness. It was a racket that even Ace Daggett would be proud to work. And now Boyce had it by the horns. He was glad of that.

Kelly would be glad and would give him back his job for breaking into this racket. He had Knox for a witness. The only thing was the girl. Somehow he detected a note of revulsion for her job in her attitude. She was going through with it because she *had* to. Something was going to happen to her if she didn't. He reached in his pocket, produced his wallet.

"Okay, Adelaide. It's all over

with now. You made a nice attempt but it didn't work. I'll take that paper you have. It can be used as evidence." He showed her his open wallet.

She looked at the card inside, then up at him. Terror had come into her eyes. For a moment he thought she was going to cry.

"You," she whispered, "you are a—"

"That's right. Special investigator for the Consolidated Insurance Company. We've been trying to break this racket of yours for a long time. But you and your bunch have been too clever. Kelly, my chief, had just about given it up and Consolidated has been forced to pay out to you for its clients because of lack of evidence. But I thought you'd try it again and this time I hit the right spot."

SHE had recoiled as his words lashed out in a low, incisive tone. Even as he spoke he could not believe that she was a part of the scheme of which he was accusing her. Not with her face, not with her eyes which were frightened and bewildered and seemed to look to him for help. But he made himself go on, his voice still caustic.

"Yeah, Miss Adelaide Page, you and your bunch have a sweet racket—or you *had*, because I'm going to bust it wide open and this time I have Mr. Herbert Knox to testify as my witness."

He noticed that the girl's eyes were darting across the road to where a wagon path disappeared into a thick clump of woods. He glanced at the path, saw nothing, but his hand went under his coat and deliberately he brought out his .38 automatic.

He saw that now the big man had moved close to them and the girl was looking at his scowling face with a mixture of panic and appeal in her glance. He held the Colt in an apparently careless position at his side as he went on talking:

"Mr. Knox is just one of many of your victims. You, Adelaide, as a pretty girl, are used as bait. You

walk along a road, wait until an expensive car comes along and catch a ride. Immediately you are in the car the driver becomes responsible and liable for your personal security. That's a law the average man doesn't know exists. You as his passenger, can collect any amount of damages you want, providing you get a shyster lawyer to prove you were hurt. So one of your mob is planted down the road and at the opportune time he slightly smashes into the car you're in, taking care he has the right of way. Then you pull your stunt and you have your victim practically helpless. And Consolidated has been paying out hundreds of thousands of dollars to their clients who have been—"

The girl's eyes had widened and were staring across at the wagon path. She gave a little gasp of fright, started to move. For an instant Boyce's eyes flicked to the path. He saw three men rushing out of the woods, ugly, short-snouted revolvers in their hands. Then his head rocked, snapped back, and he felt himself sprawling on his back, his automatic skidding from his hand.

The big man had waited for his chance and his huge fist had caught Ken Boyce's jaw during the split second interval the insurance investigator had glanced at the path.

The man had grabbed Adelaide's hand, was rushing her across the road to his rickety touring car. A gun had appeared in his hand and as Ken scrambled for his own Colt, the big man threw a shot at him from over his shoulder. The lead splattered into the macadam at Boyce's knees. He found his gun, raised it, was aiming at the man when a sudden fusillade of shots snapped and barked around him. The three men were firing as they ran for the touring car.

"Get behind your car!" Boyce called to Knox.

The little banker stood in the open, dazed, his mouth sagging with fright. He did not seem to hear the Special Investigator's brittle command. He looked uncertainly from

the big man, who was dragging the girl into the disreputable car, to the three who were charging across the road, guns flaming as they ran.

Boyce's automatic bucked his palm twice and one of the men pitched forward on his face. The other two succeeded in making it to the car, which they stood behind and used as a barricade while their revolvers blasted lead across the open road.

Knox had miraculously escaped being hit so far, but he stood in frozen fright, unable to move while shots splattered his own car three feet behind him. Ken Boyce, crouching behind the radiator, saw that the little man was not going to run to cover. He edged along the fender, suddenly leaped for Knox.

Even as he reached him, the banker cried out and slipped sideways to the road, his mouth flecked with red, two black-edged holes in his throat. He was dead by the time his loose body sprawled out on the macadam.

A CRY of rage escaped Ken Boyce's lips as the little man fell at his feet. Knox had been an innocent bystander as well as Boyce's sole witness. Now he was dead, victim of the racket.

A bullet tore away the cloth under Boyce's armpit as he leaped back to the safety of Knox's car. He heard the whir of the touring car's starter, the roar of the engine as the big man jammed it into gear. The car spurted forward, then stopped abruptly as Boyce sent a bullet into the big man's head. He slumped over the wheel and Boyce had a fleeting glimpse of the girl pushing him to one side.

The car's unexpected movement had left the two gunmen in the open road, unprotected by its tonneau. Boyce's automatic jetted flame and one of them spun forward on his chest, his head lolling to one side. The investigator's gun came up once more, drew a bead on the remaining man.

But Ken Boyce didn't fire. The man was hesitating, his face turned

toward the girl in the touring car, listening. Boyce saw that he was young, with a mop of blond hair and a weak, but handsome face. The girl was talking to him rapidly, her face white, body tensed as she crouched behind the steering wheel.

Suddenly the young fellow nodded to her, threw down his revolver, and started across the road toward the insurance investigator, his hands in the air.

Ken Boyce stood up, his automatic raised. Almost as though an uncanny sixth sense had aided his vision, he suddenly was aware of three things happening simultaneously. The girl bent low over the wheel, her foot frantically searching for the self-starter; the blond young man advancing unarmed across the road; and back where the wagon path entered the woods a man appearing.

Thinking it a ruse to detract his attention, Boyce drew a bead on the blond fellow's chest.

"Hold it!" he shouted. "Stop there and keep your hands up!"

The youth kept on coming, terror written across his pallid face. Then suddenly there was blood on his mouth, dripping over his lower lip and chin, and he sank to his knees. Boyce heard the hysterical scream of the girl as she straightened up from the wheel and saw the blond man drop. Then he swiveled his gun to meet the figure standing at the mouth of the wagon path.

He never saw the figure clearly. It became a blur that he could not distinguish from the trunks of the trees behind it. He was sinking crazily to his knees, a hot pain at the side of his head where a bullet had ripped. His gun slipped to the macadam and he groped blindly for it, laughing half-hysterically with pain as he noticed the suit he took such pride in was torn and dusty, the expensive shoes that could be bought at only one store were scarred and creased where lead had flicked them.

He had his gun in his hand, was trying to straighten up, clear his head in order to find the figure of

the man who had shot him. He got to his knees, tried to push himself up with one hand, then saw a man's feet planted squarely in front of him.

Too late he tried to jerk his head away from what he knew was coming. He felt the splitting thump of a revolver butt against the back of his head and after that there was no feeling at all.

### CHAPTER III

#### ACCUSED



**F**ROWNING, Kelly, chief of the Consolidated Insurance Special Investigators, shook his black head vigorously, his bleak blue eyes snapping.

"You had a chance to turn a trick that would have put you in solid with your job, Boyce," he rapped.

"And you would have put all of us in solid with Consolidated. None of us has been able to break that racket and here you have the chance and you let it slip through your fingers. No wonder I won't give you your job back."

Ken Boyce stood before his chief and rubbed his forehead with his hand. It was bandaged, his face was bleak and tired-looking, his suit was torn and disheveled.

"Look, Chief," he muttered, "it took two bucks to ride back here on the bus. I've only got eight left, and that's every cent I've got in the world. You can't expect me to follow this case up with only eight bucks. Give me my job back and an advance on my sal—"

"Advance!" Kelly roared. "Listen, you haven't got a job so you can't have an advance! How you going to follow up this case anyway? What have you got to go on? Nothing! Nothing but the fact that a guy named Knox was found shot to death beside his car. Sure, there were bullet scars on his car and it looked like a gun battle, but what can you prove? They found him

dead and they found you alive. Hell, I'd been just as satisfied if it had been the other way around!"

"What chance did I have against five mugs—all with gats spitting at me? I think I did pretty well considering—"

"Five guys! Five! There wasn't anybody there except you and Knox!"

"Naturally. Whoever it was clipped me on the head, dumped the other stiff into the car, took the girl and drove away. All I've got to do is find the guy that clipped me and I'll have the racket tied up in knots. Because he's the big shot, the guy behind the whole works."

Kelly's bleak eyes went colder. His voice was thin with sarcasm.

"Yeah, all you've got to do is find the guy who clipped you. There are only seven million souls in this city, so it won't be too difficult for the great detective Boyce to pick the right guy out of seven million."

Ken Boyce bent over the desk. His tired eyes had a strange light in them.

"Chief, I know where to find that guy. I can find him."

"Yeah, you can find him!"

"Besides, there's that girl. Somehow I don't believe she fits in with that bunch of hoodlums. She sort of asked me for help in a silent way."

"Oh, she sort of asked you for help in a silent way!"

"Yes. And I believe I can help her. I can get to the bottom of the racket, and that will help her."

Kelly stood up, his blue eyes frosty.

"Get out of here, Boyce. You're crazy. You've failed on this assignment just as you failed on the assignments I gave you to nab Ace Daggert. You're through. Get out."

Ken looked at his former chief for a long moment, his cobalt eyes defiant. Then he walked to the door of the office, turned.

"Okay, Chief," he said. "If that's how you want it, that's how you want it. But"—there was an odd, confident smile on his firm lips—"you're going to be in for a surprise. A good one. You put up a

big kick about Daggert, and you kicked about this insurance racket—and not you nor any of your men could get to either. I've got a hunch you'll give me my job back and a bonus to spare when I come in with both Daggert and this racket!"

"Get out of here, Boyce, before you get me as goofy as you are!"

"Okay, Chief. Okay."

Boyce didn't waste any time. He caught a Fifth Avenue bus and stayed on it until he reached Forty-second Street. Then he got off and walked midway down the block on Fifth until he came to a fashionable shop with a sign over the small doorway:

#### ESSEX BOOTS FOR GENTLEMEN

He went in. One of the clerks in a cutaway hurried up to him, smiled.

"How d' you do, Mr. Boyce," he murmured. "Something I can do for you?"

BOYCE nodded, his eyes encompassing the smart glass cases decorated with ultra-expensive shoes of all models.

"Yeah, tell Mr. Wilke I'd like to see him."

The clerk looked surprised and a trifle hurt.

"The manager, Mr. Boyce? Is something unsatisfactory? I'm certain I will do my best."

"Just tell Mr. Wilke I want to see him."

The clerk hurried away. In a few minutes, Mr. Wilke, small and dapper, appeared.

"Something wrong, Mr. Boyce? Or is it that you wish a specially constructed model? I hope you were pleased with those Scotch-grained sports that you bought? Ah, I see you have them on and they look as though they had been through the wars. Is it—"

"Listen, Mr. Wilke. This is the only shop in town sells the kind of shoe I have on, isn't it?"

Mr. Wilke looked pained.

"The only shop in the country, Mr. Boyce! We are proud of the distinction."

"Well, look. Can you give me a list of the men who have bought this kind of shoes in the last month? It's important."

Mr. Wilke studied his nails for a moment. Then:

"You are some sort of detective, Mr. Boyce. I will go so far as to disregard the rules of the store for that reason. If you will come with me—"

Ken Boyce grinned. He thought of Ace Daggert and his reputation as a dresser. He thought of the feet he had glimpsed just before that gun-butt had descended on his head; he remembered the shoes. Those brogues were the same, he remembered, as his own.

And he figured there was only one place in town where they could be bought. He smiled again and followed Mr. Wilke into the adjoining office—

He had something less than eight dollars left when he came out of the subway at Seventh-ninth and walked over to West End Avenue. He stopped in front of an imposing, grey-stone façaded apartment house. Down the street he could see a strip of Riverside Drive as it wended its way along the bank of the Hudson. This was a section of wealth. Only the rich could afford apartments in these buildings.

Boyce adjusted the gun in his shoulder holster, taking care that the uniformed doorman did not see his action. Then he went through the glass doors, across the luxurious, intimate lobby to the desk. The clerk was busy at the moment with a register book and Boyce turned his back, leaned against the desk and waited patiently.

He straightened up, stared for a split second with mingled surprise and pleasure as she came in, then turned his face away quickly so she wouldn't see. It was Adelaide Page and the girl went straight for the elevators. Boyce sauntered after her.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, sir," the clerk called after him. "May I help you?"

"No, thanks," Boyce said out of



the side of his mouth. "I can find my way now."

The girl was staring fixedly at her feet, face taut, eyes a little glazed with pain and what Boyce thought might be sorrow. Something in his throat tightened as he watched her. He didn't want to see her hurt this way, she didn't deserve it. She was too good to look at, something about her was too instinctively fine.

She didn't belong in any kind of rotten racket. He felt a sudden impulse to tell her so, to tell her he was trying to help her, to take her in his arms and tell her not to worry. He looked away.

The elevator door opened and she stepped in. Boyce decided to get in with her and risk the chance of her recognizing him before she had led him to the apartment. Unless he gave the nature of his business to the clerk at the desk he would never be given the apartment number. And Adelaide appeared so despondent and preoccupied that he did not think she would even glance at him. She didn't.

On the sixth floor she got out. He waited until she had walked part of the way down the red-carpeted corridor, then followed her at a respectful distance.

**S**TILL oblivious of anything but the thoughts preying so despairingly on her mind, the girl stopped in front of one of the mahogany doors, extended her hand to the brass knocker. For a moment she hesitated, as though trying to make up her mind or steel herself for an unpleasant ordeal. A look of grim determination flashed over her pale face and she reached resolutely for the knocker.

"Wait!" Ken Boyce said softly. "Wait, Adelaide. Don't go in there. Let me talk to you first."

She spun around, frightened. As she recognized him her expression changed, and hatred suddenly took the place of fear. The violet in her eyes seemed to grow black, the nostrils of the delicate nose flared. Her voice was virulent and husky with restrained rage.

"What do you want? What are you doing here—*killer!*"

Her abrupt vehemence caught Boyce unawares.

"I don't—" he murmured. "What are you—"

"Haven't you done enough?" the girl whispered hoarsely. "I thought; at first I could trust you. Somehow I thought you stood for what is honorable and clean."

"But I don't see—"

"You turned out to be more of a—a rat, a coward than any of those animals I was with! You're a coward and a killer!"

**K**EN BOYCE shook his head. "I don't understand what you mean, Adelaide. But I do know that I want to help you. I wanted to yesterday. I want to now. That's one of the reasons I'm here. You must believe that. I can help you if you'll let me—if you'll trust me."

She looked at him intently; her eyes softening a trifle. Then they glinted again and her voice was hard.

She said:

"How can I trust a coward! A man who would mercilessly shoot down an unarmed man—hardly more than a boy!"

"Adelaide! What do you mean? I didn't shoot down—"

She moved closer to him, her eyes flashing, her breath coming sharply between her words.

"Yes, you did! The blond young man who talked to me—the one I convinced to go to you and surrender—because he was young and weak and because he wasn't bad but frightened. He did what I told him. He threw away his gun, started across the road to you, and you—you shot my brother without giving him a chance!"

All the emotion of her hatred seemed to ebb as the scene was recalled to her mind, and suddenly she was crying, sobbing softly as she swayed back against the wall of the corridor, her hands covering her face, her bosom rising and falling as the sobs caught in her throat.

Pain and bewilderment etched

Ken Boyce's face. He moved close to her.

"I didn't know he was your brother, Adelaide. And I didn't shoot him. You know that. You *must* know it. It was someone else's bullet, not mine."

Slowly she looked up at him, her eyes wet, the catch still in her throat.

"But if you didn't shoot Ted, who—who did?"

Boyce took both her hands in his and pressed them.

"I'm going to find out," he said softly. "I believe the man who shot your brother was the man who came out of that wagon path when it was almost all over, the same man who clipped me on the head, the same man whom I've been trying to nab for a long time, the man who owns this apartment inside—Ace Daggert."

THE girl caught her breath sharply. "But—but he wouldn't shoot Ted. Ted was working for him. Ted was one of Ace's men. Ace wouldn't shoot one of his own men."

"Ace saw that you had convinced your brother to surrender to me. Ace didn't want that. That would be living evidence against him. Before he'd let that happen he—" Boyce broke off significantly. Then he looked intently at the girl.

"You can trust me, Adelaide," he said softly. "You've got to believe that. I'm in a jam as much as you are. If I don't get Daggert, I don't get my job back, and that means I don't eat. You've got to help me, stick by me. I'll see us both through this mess."

She nodded, took out her handkerchief and dabbed her eyes.

"I trust you," she whispered. "For some reason I do trust you."

"Adelaide, why are you in with this racket? And why was your brother in it—with Daggert?"

The girl held her taut throat as though to loosen it.

"Because Ted," she said slowly, "was in a street brawl once. He was drunk; he and another man

fought. He beat the man badly—and the man died in a hospital later. My brother wasn't caught, but one of Daggert's men saw the fight. Daggert used that to hold over Ted's head; made him work all the society rackets for him. Ted couldn't get away."

"But you?"

She closed her eyes, then opened them and looked at him.

"I don't have anything to do with Daggert. Please believe that. The girl who was supposed to do my



part in this insurance holdup could not show up. Ace Daggert forced Ted under threat of exposing him, to make me work as a substitute. You see, Ace likes—he thinks he—"

"I see. Daggert's in love with you."

"Yes."

"And you?" Boyce's voice was tight.

"My brother was killed yesterday. There is no further reason for me to obey Daggert. I was going in to tell him I was through when you saw me."

Ken Boyce breathed easier. He turned and looked at the door.

"Stick with me, Adelaide," he said swiftly. "I might need you to locate something in this apartment for—"

He stopped abruptly as the door swung inward and a man came out. The man was abnormally thin, abnormally tall. He was dressed in black, had a brutally ascetic face, long and thin, with scraggy jaw. He carried a physician's black case with him. At sight of the man, the girl drew back and uttered a sharp exclamation of surprise.

"Doctor Tolman!"

## CHAPTER IV

## BULLET SEARCH



THE physician's thick eyebrows went down in a frown as he recognized Adelaide Page. Then a perfunctory smile asserted itself.

"How do you do, Miss Page. Coincidence meeting you here. Just attending one of my patients. Shall I—"

Hurriedly he made a move to go back into the apartment and close the door. Ken Boyce grasped him roughly by the shoulder, swung him into the hall.

"Go on, Tolman. Keep on going. you aren't going back in there and warn anybody I'm here. Keep going."

Dr. Tolman glanced at the size of Boyce's knotted fists, muttered something under his breath, then hurried down the hall and rang for the elevator. When the car appeared he got into it and Boyce saw by the indicator that it didn't stop until it reached the first floor.

"How'd you know him?" he whispered to the girl, his hand on the knob of the half closed door. He knew he would have to move fast now, before the man with the physician's bag should get to a telephone.

"He's the doctor who signed my brother's death certificate," Adelaide said, her voice low.

Boyce frowned. "That's not all he is. He's a quack—a fake doctor. He lost his license a long time ago. He's also a mortician. That's how he makes his money. He's a member of Daggert's mob."

"But Ted!" the girl cried. "I left him at Tolman's—"

"We'll attend to that later. I've got to take a look at Ted. We have to go in here. Keep your chin up and trust me."

He took out his automatic .38, gently kicked the door open and

went in. The girl followed close behind him.

The door opened into a small alcovelike hallway which was empty. They emerged into a large luxurious dining room, also empty. Three doors led off from the dining room. Boyce contemplated them, undecided. The girl indicated one of the doors.

"That's the living room," she whispered. "That's where he'll most likely be."

Boyce nodded. He moved silently to the door, turned the knob. The door swung inward and he went in with it. It was a living room, done on an elaborate scale, its modern chromium and enamel appointments blending in good taste with the multi-colored books row upon row in the tall shelves that clung to the four walls. At one end of the room was a large flat-topped desk, and behind the desk were long windows draped with scarlet and silver variegated curtains.

"Turn around, Ace," Boyce said. The telephone on the desk started ringing shrilly. "And keep away from that phone. Tolman's too late to warn you."

Ace Daggert's lean figure, standing immobile before the window, started, then he swung around and scowled in surprise at Boyce and the girl. His face was bony, his eyes small and close together, his dark hair coming down to a point on his low forehead. He resembled nothing so much as a scrawny, powerful demon as he glared from the gun in Ken Boyce's hand to the pale, resolute face of the girl—

He gave one glance toward the phone, then shrugged. It stopped ringing. Finally a thin, sardonic smile creased his lips and he nodded.

"Hello, Boyce."

"I've come to get you, Ace. This time it's for keeps."

"Get me for what?"

"For killing a little guy by the name of Herbert Knox. For killing a boy named Ted Page."

Daggert's smile remained set, leathery. His voice was flat with arrogance.

"Still a sucker, eh, Boyce?" he

drawled. "Still chasing around trying to pin something on me. Still the Boy Scout trying to make good and nab the bad man. Why don't you wise up and stop this stuff? I've made a fool out of you so many times I'm getting fed up with it."

Ken Boyce's eyes were hard, his voice low and metallic.

"You were smart yesterday, Ace. You stepped out of that woods and shot Ted Page when the boy was going to come clean and spill the works to me. You shot little Knox who would have been my witness. You packed those stiffies into a car and carried them here, disposed of them some way—probably as you've done before—into the river, so that when they're found, if ever, their own mothers wouldn't recognize them. Yeah, Ace, you did your usual thorough job. But you made one mistake. You didn't kill me."

Daggert shrugged, his right hand slipping almost imperceptibly to the pocket in his dressing gown.

"Small thanks I get," he grinned. "You'll get your thanks—in the hot seat. Keep your hand away from your pocket."

Daggert nodded easily and deliberately folded his arms. There was a slight, accusing frown on his face as his eyes wavered to the girl.

"What are you doing with this two-for-a-nickel insurance detective, Adelaide?" he asked. "That's no way to treat me, honey; keeping cheap company like that."

The girl's eyes were cold, her voice huskier than ever.

"We're through, Ace," she said icily. "Through, do you hear? I've tolerated you. I even memorized those lines and played my part in that insurance holdup of yours. I had to or you would have harmed Ted. But yesterday you—you killed my brother! Shot him down in cold—"

"Shut up, honey." Daggert's small eyes were suddenly blazing. The vehemence of the girl's attack had disconcerted him for the moment. "Who says I shot your brother?"

"Ken Boyce said—he told me that—"

Daggert's regained composure had put the girl off balance and she faltered. Boyce immediately came to her rescue.

"I said it, Ace. And I can prove it. I want the gun you used to kill Ted Page. Your bullets weren't found in Herbert Knox. They were slugs from the guns of some of your dead mobsters. But your bullet will be in Ted Page's body, Ace. And I'll find it because you're in love with Adelaide and you went soft and allowed her to place his body in Doc Tolman's mortuary in preparation for a decent burial. That slug along with your gun and Adelaide's evidence will be enough to electrocute you. I'm coming for your gun, Ace. Don't move your hands."

DAGGERT'S eyes were smoldering, his shoulders heaving under his dressing gown. Suddenly, as Boyce came toward him, he smiled.

"Listen, Boyce. If you're so sure I was in on this thing, why don't you call the police?"

"Because if you used any of your usual snake tricks and squirmed out of this rap, you could make it plenty hot for me for false accusations and arrest. You've done it before. I'm getting the dope this time."

"And without that slug and the gun you haven't much of a case?"

"You know that as well as I do. You're not stupid."

Daggert laughed, dryly amused and suddenly relieved.

"Okay, Boy Scout. Take a gander at my gun."

Carefully Boyce patted the man's figure. The gun in the pocket of the dressing gown was the only weapon Daggert carried. Boyce drew it out and looked at it. It was a pocket size .30 caliber automatic. Boyce studied it.

"Somehow, I don't think this is the gun, Ace," he said. "You're too smart to carry the other one when it's hot. I'll have a look around."

For twenty minutes he searched through every conceivable hiding place in the apartment. Daggert followed him, the sardonic, confident

grin on his face. At last Ken gave it up.

"You know of any place he might keep it, Adelaide?" he asked the girl. "A safe somewhere? A secret place?"

Daggert's eyes fixed on Adelaide's face, and there was a tense expression about his mouth. The girl considered for a moment, then shook her head.

"No," she said. "I don't think so."

Daggert grinned again.

"On my desk is a box of the .30 caliber bullets I use for my little cannon," he said. "You can take a look at those too, Boy Scout, if you think it'll do you any good."

Boyce looked at him. Daggert seemed too confident, suddenly too sure of himself, as though he had successfully pulled the wool over Ken Boyce's eyes and was reveling in the thought. Boyce didn't like the setup, but there seemed little he could do about it. He was stymied.

"I'll look at them, Ace," he said.

They went into the living room again. Boyce picked up the box of cartridges. He emptied some of them out in his hand. Then he reached over, took a magnifying glass from the desk and held it in front of one of the bullets.

"Striations of a slug often tell a lot," he muttered. He put the glass back on the table.

"If you're all finished, Sherlock," Daggert sneered, "you can hand back my gun. And then get out. I'm tired of fooling with you. Next time you meddle in my affairs I won't be so easy on you."

BOYCE put Daggert's gun on the desk, pointed his at the man.

"We'll just leave your gun here until you escort us to the door, Ace. Safety first is a good motto."

Daggert turned on his leering smile, shrugged, and led them to the front door. Boyce looked down at Daggert's feet.

"Little things lead to big things sometimes," he murmured. "I'm glad you wear the same shoe that I do: It led me to you. Maybe some other little thing will lead you to

the chair, Ace. Sorry to have troubled you. Let's get out of here, Adelaide."

Daggert's arrogant grin vanished and a scowl appeared. He put his bony hand on the girl's shoulder, pulled her back toward him.

"Adelaide's not going with you, punk. Clear out. Adelaide's staying here. Ain't you, honey?" He slipped his arm about her waist.

The girl's face was livid. She tried to push away. Boyce looked at her.

"Do you want to stay, Adelaide?" he said.

"I never want to see him again!" she cried.

"You heard that, Ace?"

"Get the hell out of here, Boy Scout, before I lose my temper!"

Deliberately Boyce holstered his gun.

"Okay, Ace," he said.

Then his left hand darted out, grasped Daggert's shoulder, jerked him away from the girl. The special investigator's right fist connected with Daggert's jaw and the sharp, powerful impact knocked the racketeer halfway across the room, where his back smacked the dining table. He sank to the floor, his breath wheezing between moans, his hands coming up and covering his face.

Boyce and the girl hurried out and Boyce rang for the elevator. Not until he had hurried her into a cab did he speak.

"What's the address of the mortuary where your brother was taken?"

"Eleventh Avenue and Fifty-seventh," she answered, staring at him. He gave the driver the address, looked out of the window behind as they headed across to upper Broadway.

"We haven't got much of a start," Boyce said. "Daggert knows where we're going, and he knows where Tolman headed straight when there was no answer to his phone call. I knew there was no danger of Tolman's coming back himself. He's too much of a coward for that. Either he or some of his men will

follow us—probably get there before I can find what I want.”

The girl leaned closer toward him, her eyes soft as they looked into his.

“I hope,” she said, “that nothing happens to you. Somehow I think you’ll win out. I want you to know that I trust you.”

His hand closed over hers.

“I hope,” he said, “I won’t let you down.”

Doctor Tolman’s mortuary was a dreary building of grey stone and had been converted from an old-fashioned mansion. It had a bleak, morbid look about it. Boyce paid off the driver and he and the girl went in through the open front door.

Dr. Tolman himself came from somewhere in the rear to meet them. His ascetic face was fixed in a thin smile as he greeted them. He showed no sign of surprise at their visit.

“You have come to take a last look at your dear brother, no doubt,” he said to Adelaide with the low, monotonous tone of the professional sympathizer, completely ignoring their former meeting as though it had never happened.

“Listen, Tolman,” Boyce rapped, “forget that stuff. Daggert has probably already called you and told you to stall us off until he gets here or sends somebody for us. So get moving.” He went up to Tolman and whispered sharply into the lean man’s ear. Tolman’s expression was pained and shocked.

“Really, my good fellow. I can’t do that. It isn’t ethical and—”

“Quit stalling, heel,” Boyce said. He turned to Adelaide. “I’m whispering because what I have to say isn’t pleasant for you to hear.”

“I think I know,” the girl murmured. “You—you want the bullet from—from Ted’s—”

Boyce nodded. He gave Tolman a shove.

“Get going before I start in the strongarm stuff.”

Boyce was still capitalizing upon Tolman’s known cowardice. He knew what he was after, but he had to work fast to get the necessary evidence.

## CHAPTER V

### QUICK THINKING



HEY moved into a dismal, shaded room. On a heavy table reposed a casket. A prickle of natural distaste for things pertaining to death etched along Ken Boyce’s neck and spine. He saw the face, white and waxen, of a youth

lying in the casket.

“All right, Tolman,” he said; “do your stuff. I want the bullet from Ted Page’s body. I know it’s still there. When you forged the death certificate I’m pretty sure you did not take the trouble to remove the slug.”

He glanced at Tolman when the tall man didn’t answer. Then he cursed and ducked instinctively. A short, barrel-chested man, powerful of arm and leg, with the hairy face of a gorilla, and wearing an interne’s white coat, was running for him, at a crouch. The man’s feet had made no sound on the carpeted floor. Before Boyce had time to move the man had dived at him, the full weight of his compact, animal body catapulting into the insurance investigator’s chest.

Boyce went down and hit the floor hard, knocked breathless from the force of the tackle. The man squirmed over his body, apeline, his muscular arms flaying Boyce’s face with blows that rocked his senses.

Boyce fought back as best he could, but he was no match for the strength of the gorillalike man, who snarled bestially, breathed heavily, as he pounded. Suddenly the man stopped using his fists, his arms went around Boyce’s neck in a hug that had him choking from strangulation.

Red and black jagged spots flecked before the investigator’s eyes as his throat contracted, and what little breath he had left began to sear in his chest. He saw Adelaide appear at the doorway, heard

her stifled scream as she took in the situation. He had a glimpse of Tolman darting for her suddenly, wrapping his long, bony arms about her and dragging her into the room.

Boyce's arms flailed the hairy face on the bullet head above him, but his blows became weaker as the steel bands about his neck contracted and shut off every bit of air from his scorched lungs. Things began to wobble crazily and then the room whirled around.

With a last desperate, convulsive wrench of his body he twisted and squirmed, managed suddenly to roll over, and throw the weight of the man off his chest. He felt the man's body jar as it came into violent contact with something solid. He heard the scraping of wood and there was a split second during which he knew something had moved above him and was going to hurl down upon him with devastating destruction for anything it crushed below it.

It crashed into the bullet head that still hung tenaciously above his. It sent the wind from Boyce's lungs with a whistling rush. He felt as though some giant monster had walked upon him. Things went black for a moment, then he was conscious again and aware of a terrific weight mashing him against the floor.

With the weakened strength he possessed he managed to twist from underneath the weight. He staggered to his feet, hauling out his gun and training it on Tolman, taking a quick glance at his feet as he did so. When he had thrown the interne with that last wrench of his body, the man had crashed into the tenuous legs of the table, broken one of them, and the casket it had supported had slid off and fallen onto the interne's head. He lay under the big metal box, twisted and still.

"Let her go, Tolman!" Boyce clipped. Tolman glared at him and released the girl. "Now, get your scalpel—or whatever you use—and remove that bullet before I throw one into you."

He followed Tolman into the next room with its long white table and rows of glistening instruments. Sulenly and deliberately Tolman selected a small, keen-edged scalpel. They went back and Tolman bent over the casket. The girl gave a sharp, pained cry and turned her back.

"For God's sake," Boyce rasped, "can't you do that in the next room, like you would an autopsy? I don't want Adelaide to see—"

"I CAN'T! I can't!" Tolman suddenly shouted. "It's got to be here!" Then abruptly he resumed his suave, urbane manner, and added: "Excuse me. What I mean is, it won't take a second. I can do it here."

Boyce nodded. There was something strange about that, he thought. Tolman was too concerned about performing the gruesome post-mortem work without disturbing the body. But he said nothing, waited until Tolman finally straightened up, extended his hand, upon the palm of which lay a lead slug.

Boyce took it. "I want a thick glass," he said. "Any kind of heavy drinking glass." Tolman went into the next room and Boyce stood at the doorway. "Fill it with water," he commanded. Tolman did so and handed it to the investigator.

Boyce held the slug up against the light, put the glass against it, magnifying the striations in the lead.

"This slug came from a .32 caliber revolver," he muttered. "The kind I have seen Ace Daggert carry. The gun Ace showed me was not the gun he used to kill your brother, Adelaide."

He held the glass against the bullet again and the girl looked at it with him.

"If I can only find the gun, I'll have evidence against Ace Daggert that will send him to the chair so quick—"

"I'll show you the gun, Boy Scout. And I'll show you how that gun works."

Boyce swung around, swore luridly.



Slowly he let his automatic drop to the floor, and looked squarely into the small gleaming eyes of Ace Daggert. Daggert grinned sourly, held the gun in his hand on the insurance investigator.

"Tolman, take Adelaide and hold her against the wall over there," he rapped. But be sure you don't obstruct her view. There's something going to happen that I want her to see. Her boy friend is going to take a trip right before her eyes. And he's going to be sent on that trip by the same gun he's been wanting to find. How do you like that, Boy Scout?"

Smiling, he edged over to the casket. He bent slightly and his hand groped under the half closed lid of the casket. It came out holding a revolver, a revolver that Ken Boyce instantly recognized as being a .32 caliber type.

Boyce realized then why Tolman had been so reluctant to take the lid off the casket, or extract the bullet in the other room.

Daggert slowly pocketed his small .30 automatic, then deliberately moved close to Ken Boyce, raising the revolver until it pointed at the investigator's forehead.

"I'm going to make it easy on you, sucker. I'm going to give it to you in the brain where it won't hurt much. It can't hurt what you haven't got. If you'd had any brains you'd have kept your nose out of my business. But you had to monkey around till you found the gun I killed Page with. Now you've found it, punk! And now you're going to get it from that same gun."

The revolver stiffened in Daggert's grasp. His finger grew white as he pressed the trigger gently. The sardonic smile on his face had become fiendish. Boyce's hands slipped tensely to his sides, his fingers grazing the outside of his pockets. Suddenly the taut lines of his face relaxed and a slow, deliberate grin broke over his face. A look of puzzlement and rage came over Daggert.

"You think it's funny, do you!" he roared. "It won't be funny when—"

"Save your breath, Ace," Boyce

said calmly. "You're not going to harm me with that gun."

"I'm not going to— Are you crazy?"

Boyce shook his head, still smiling. The sweat on his forehead belied the coolness of his grin but Daggert didn't notice.

"Why do you think," Boyce said evenly, "that casket is on the floor? Naturally you wouldn't be able to figure that."

Daggert's eyes narrowed with suspicion, his voice was hoarse.

"Why?"

"Because, like a Boy Scout, I did my job thoroughly. I found the murder gun!"

"You found—"

"Of course. And that's why you are not going to shoot me with it. I'm sorry, Ace, but that gun is empty. I emptied it ten minutes ago!"

To confirm his words, Boyce reached in his pocket, took out four bullets and tossed them contemptuously at Daggert's feet.

"There are the slugs, Ace. The same kind that killed young Page."

Daggert's face went livid. For a moment he stared with insane rage at the calmly grinning face of Ken Boyce. Then he cursed wildly and his hand fumbled in his pocket for his other gun.

THAT was all Boyce needed. He dropped to the floor, retrieved his own automatic before Daggert's hand came halfway out of his pocket.

Boyce's gun lanced flame twice. Lead streaked into Ace Daggert's knees. The racketeer screamed, sank to the floor, hands clutching his wounded knees. Boyce whirled in time to see Tolman making a desperate leap for the door. Again his gun jetted fire and Tolman jerked as though he had been stabbed, jack-knifed to the floor and also clutched at his knee while his voice shrilled hysterical shrieks.

Ken Boyce walked over to the moaning Daggert, quietly stooped and picked up the racketeer's revolver. He pocketed it.

"A little painful, that knee business," he said softly. "But mighty effective. And you'll live, Ace. You will be able to walk to the chair."

He came over to the girl, took her hand in his and squeezed it gently.

"You all right?"

Her face was white and tired and frightened, but her eyes were a little misty. She managed to nod.

"And you?" she murmured.

He nodded, smiled reassuringly.

"In the hall you'll find a phone. Better let the police in on this. I'll watch my friends in here."

When she came back she had regained her composure. Her voice was still husky but a trace of color had come back into her cheeks.

"When," she asked, "did you get the chance to empty that gun?"

Boyce smiled, shook his head. "I didn't empty it. It was just a bluff. And Ace Daggert wasn't used to bluffs. He fell for it."

"But the bullets you took from your pocket?"

"They were just like the clue his shoes gave me. From them I found out where he lived. I told him little things often led to big things. The bullets I felt in my pocket gave me the idea of the bluff. And those bullets were the ones that Ace himself gave me in his apartment!"

Adelaide looked up at him, her hand in his. The violet had come into her eyes again, and a tremulous smile to her lips.

"Everything is finished now, isn't it?" she said quietly.

He grinned, drew her close to him.

"No, not everything. First I've got to see Kelly, that boss of mine. I've a few things to say to him. Then—" For a long moment he looked at her squarely. "There will be another thing to attend to. A very important thing. Only I can't attend to that alone."

SIMON TEMPLAR *and* INSPECTOR TEAL  
MATCH WITS IN

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**By LESLIE CHARTERIS**

—in Next Month's Issue of POPULAR DETECTIVE

# College Humor

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# Wanted by the D. A.

*A Nemesis Lurks in the  
Sweet Scent of a  
Rose!*

By  
AVIN H. JOHNSTON

*Author of  
"Last Bullet," "Piped Orders," etc.*

UNDER ordinary circumstances Carter Morris did not resemble the popular conception of a crook. Known on the Street as the head of Morris and Company, reputable brokers, his shock of white hair, his hard lips and firm chin were generally construed to be the trademarks of an honest dealer in bonds and stocks.

But just now, crouched over the desk in his ornate Westchester home, Carter Morris did not in the least look the part of a respectable Wall Street broker. His white hair was ruffled, there was a dampness on his forehead not brought about by the June weather.

Morris worked feverishly with the papers on the desk. There were bundles of securities, pads of bank notes, all of large denomination, more money in loose piles.

"Sixty thousand in cash!" Morris mumbled as he worked. "An even hundred thousand in securities! I can cash them anywhere. Get this matter straight and I'll grab the first boat for Europe. One's sailing to-



*The sound of a car brought him back  
to the window in a single leap*

morrow. That'll give me time." He rubbed a hand across his face.

"God!" he whispered. "I've got to get away before they find out about that Texas oil deal. Hundred and sixty thousand! That'll keep me for a time. It'll blow over. Sure it will! It'll blow over."

He was trying to bolster up the courage he had felt slipping away during the last hectic week, during which time he worked over the books of his company, endeavoring to falsify the accounts, stave off the pending investigation he knew would shortly take place. Hadn't two of his investors demanded an accounting of their money placed in his keeping on that Texas deal?

Morris cursed bitterly. Thirty years on the Street thrown over by one stupid move. Like many others on the Street, Morris and Company had been hit hard. Carter Morris had seen a chance to make a clean-up, recover some of his losses. It was on the shady side of the ledger.

but he had taken it—and lost out.

Even now the D.A. was after those in on the Texas deal—and he was one of the principal fish.

Morris worked feverishly for another ten minutes, stuffed the money and securities into a bag, locked it, thrust the key into his pocket, rose and crossed to the window.

Visions of newspaper headlines flashed before his eyes. He saw them as if they were reality and not figments of his fevered brain:

**CARTER MORRIS, FINANCIER  
AND FLOWER FANCIER  
ARRESTED BY D. A.'s OFFICE**

**Reported Moving Spirit Behind  
Huge Texas Oil Swindle**

**MILLIONS LOST BY INVESTORS**

Morris' breath choked him, sweat made his hands and face clammy. In an effort to divert his mind from the subject, he swept the lawns and gardens with a swift glance. Everywhere was a riot of color. Hundreds of rosebushes clustered around the lawn. Roses he had trained and watched, treated and experimented with. Roses of every color under the sun, cross-strains he had grown by himself. Roses he loved—his hobby.

Morris tore his gaze from their beauty and stumbled back into the room. As he reached the desk, the sound of a car rolling across the gravel drive brought him back to the window in a single leap. It was a big car. It contained four men.

Four letters on the side door sent Morris lurching against the window edge, grasping the wood for support. The four letters were U.S.D.A. Morris' face lost its color.

"The district attorney's men!" he whispered, the sound coming from between shaking lips.

He whirled to the desk, tossed the bag containing the cash and securities into a lower drawer, locked it. His eyes roved wildly around the room. The front doorbell chimed.

The broker lurched again to the window and what he saw there sent

his knees weak. One man from the car stood near the bottom of the steps. A second wandered around towards the rear of the house out of his sight, a third bent over a rosebush, apparently examining the beauty of the flowers. The fourth was not in sight.

Wade, Morris' butler, knocked on the door of the study, entered. If he noted Morris' terror-stricken condition he made no sign.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," his dry voice said. "Says it's important."

Morris choked before he replied.

"Tell him to wait! I'll see him in a moment."

Wade withdrew. Morris pounded the desk with clenched fists.

"Caught!" He mouthed the word.

No use trying to get away. The man who had gone around to the back would block that exit. There was no other way out of the house except the front and back doors. The windows! No, they'd spot him for sure, one of them. Bluff it out! He didn't have the nerve.

He glared wildly around the room. A short barking laugh bubbled from his lips. There was *one* way out—

"MR. MORRIS will see you in a moment, sir," said Wade to the man at the door.

"Sure! Just wanted to—"

The words were cut short by a crackling shot from the study. Both men plunged into the room. Wade jerked back with a cry.

Carter Morris sat at his desk, his head on the blotter. A thin trickle of blood seeped from a hole in his right temple, staining the blotter; smoke floated from the gun clenched in his right hand.

"Mr. Morris!" cried Wade.

The other man whistled. "Whew! this looks like a case for the coroner. My business will have to wait. I'm from the Department of Agriculture. We wanted a few roots of that Blue Giant rose he developed recently. Wanted them for the President's garden at the White House. But I guess that'll have to wait—now."

When a Man-Made Lens Crashes, Dr. Feather's X-Ray  
Eyes Serve to Crack a Mystery!



*Don't touch the closet, Kit. Keep away!"*

# Murder Under the Microscope

By RAY CUMMINGS

*Author of "Thoughts of Guilt," "Death Arrow," etc.*

"**T**HE bullet went through his heart," Sergeant Dugan said. "He fell right under his microscope."

"You think it's an inside job?" Dr. Feather suggested.

The sergeant spoke lugubriously. "So far, Dr. Feather, I know com-

pletely nothin' about what it is. We got the murder weapon—little pearl-handled revolver. It was in a flower bed. If it was an outside murderer, then he dropped it makin' his get-away. Or it could have been thrown from the window of the murder room."

---

FEATURING DOCTOR FEATHER, CRIME SPECIALIST

---

"You picked it up from where it was lying?" Dr. Feather said. "Dear me, that's too bad."

"No fingerprints on it that amount to anything. What's too bad?"

"Well if you'd left it alone, Sergeant, maybe we could have told how far it dropped. The trajectory of its fall might have—"

"Lord, I never thought of that," Dugan agreed. "Well, anyways, we found it. The victim, he must have staggered around the room a bit before he fell. There's several places with blood."

"Staggered around with a bullet in his heart? Good heavens, Sergeant."

"I told you there's some queer stuff in this, didn't I? That's why I wanted you to come, Dr. Feather. Oh, hello, Miss Kit."

**D**R. FEATHER'S slim, dark-haired seventeen-year-old daughter, Kit, had parked their limousine. She joined them on the moonlit veranda of the big, rambling, four-story Maple Grove home of Dr. George Randolph who lay murdered in his laboratory on the second floor.

It was two A.M., a placid summer evening.

"Five people were in the house," Dugan said. "I got 'em all here in the sittin' room. If you discard the two women—I guess you can, all right—then that leaves three men, if it was an inside job."

They passed a uniformed man at the front door, and traversed a hallway. As they entered a brightly lighted living room it seemed that the two women there had no guilty knowledge of the tragedy. They were seated on a couch in a corner. Mrs. Green, the housekeeper, a grey-haired, motherly-looking woman, dressed in a wrapper, was holding the hand of a young woman beside her—Ruth Randolph, twenty-year-old daughter of the murdered physician. Ruth was fully dressed, but her dark hair was rumpled, her eyes red from crying. So obvious was her shock at the loss of her father that Dr. Feather impulsively held out his hand.

"My goodness, I'm really very sorry, Miss Randolph."

Her tremulous smile held dignity. "Thank you," she said. "Do we—have to answer many more questions?"

"Dear me, I'll be as quick as I can."

Two of the men had jumped from their chairs. Both were young and wore dressing gowns over their pajamas and house slippers.

"This is Dr. John Parker," Dugan said. "Dr. Randolph's assistant for the past two years."

The young physician had been seated near the murdered man's daughter, with a hand on her arm as though to comfort her. He was a slim, pale, delicate-looking fellow with sleek, brown hair and a neat brown mustache.

"How do you do, Dr. Feather," he said. "Anything that we can do to help—"

"And this," Dugan said, "is Mr. Randolph's secretary, Lee Johnson. He's been here about two years."

Johnson was a ruddy, stocky fellow with a mop of curly hair. His smooth-shaven face was flushed. He coughed nervously.

"We've told Sergeant Dugan everything that happened," he said. "What I want to know—are we suspected of this thing, by any chance? Because if we are—"

"Dr. Feather will ask the questions," Dugan said.

"Dear me, I just want to hear you people tell what happened," Dr. Feather said mildly.

The facts were simple. Dr. Randolph, the murdered man, had been a retired physician. He was a wealthy widower with a considerable property and a large correspondence so that he needed the services of a secretary. And two years ago Dr. Randolph had engaged in secret research work, and had hired Dr. Parker as his assistant.

"There can be no secret about it now," Dr. Parker said earnestly. "Dr. Randolph was seeking a virus for the control of cancer, tumor—pathological abnormalities of cell reproduction."

"He was successful?" Dr. Feather asked.

"Yes. We had a formula—"

"Was it something that could get stolen?" Dugan demanded.

The young assistant shook his head. "No. Merely a series of progressive experiments."

The circumstances of the crime also were simple. At midnight Dr. Randolph had been alone in his laboratory, working with his microscope. Dr. Parker whose bedroom was twenty feet away on the second floor, had gone to bed and to sleep. So also, had the secretary, in his own bedroom about the same distance in the other direction along the hall.

"I guess the shot woke me up," the secretary said. "I lay a minute, getting awake. Then I went out into the hall. I saw Dr. Parker come from his room—"

"That's correct," the young physician said. "The shot woke me. We met out in the hall. The laboratory door was closed. We rushed in and saw—"

The murdered man's daughter gave a low cry.

"Quite so," Dr. Feather said hastily. "Never mind the details."

He stared at the two men, his head tilted, his mild eyes searching them.

Both were plainly nervous. Dr. Parker was abnormally pale, tensed as though his nerves were close to the breaking point. Johnson was not only flushed, but his eyes were abnormally bright.

**A**BRUPTLY Dr. Feather turned from them to Mrs. Green.

"Where were you?" he asked the housekeeper.

She looked frightened. "I had gone to bed—up on the fourth floor, the west wing. I was took sick with the indigestion. Miss Ruth, she—"

"I went up with her about midnight," Ruth said. "I hadn't undressed as you see. I sat with her—"

"You didn't hear the shot?" Dr. Feather asked.

"I don't think so. If we did hear

it, we must have thought it an automobile out in the street. Then Dr. Parker and Mr. Johnson came rushing up. They—they told us—" Her voice broke, her eyes filled with tears.

The third man, seated across the room, a big, heavy-set fellow of perhaps fifty had not spoken. He was wearing a pair of trousers with the tails of a flannel nightshirt tucked into them. He shifted nervously as Dr. Feather looked at him.

"Who are you?" Dr. Feather asked.

"William Green," the man said. "That's my wife." He gestured to the housekeeper. "We've been employed by Dr. Randolph for ten years."

"And where were you when the shot was fired?"

"I didn't hear it," Green said. "I was asleep. My bedroom's on the fourth floor, jus' a little ways from my wife's."

"But dear me, your wife was sick," Dr. Feather said.

"She was gettin' better by half past twelve," Green declared. "Miss Ruth was with her, so they told me to go to bed. I wuz tired—gardenin' all day. First thing I heard, everybody was poundin' on my door, shoutin' that Dr. Randolph was murdered."

The silent little Kit had been standing at the living room door, unobtrusively, her alert eyes missing nothing. Abruptly she said.

"I think any such details, down here, Father—"

"Of course, child," Dr. Feather turned. "I believe I've heard quite enough. Let's go upstairs, Sergeant."

In the hall, Kit said: "Those men—it's hard to choose between them, Father."

"Don't even try to jump to conclusions, Kit."

At the door of the murder room Dr. Feather paused with Kit beside him as they peered at the mute tragedy. The room was more a study than a laboratory, a fairly large square room with a single window, the door to the hall, and one other,



small door which the sergeant said opened into a clothes closet.

A library of technical books lined one wall. A small X-ray machine and fluoroscopic apparatus stood in one corner. In another was a glass cabinet of surgical instruments. There were two upholstered reclining chairs, several other chairs, and one or two tables, with electric table lamps and a litter of medical magazines. Small Oriental rugs were scattered on the floor.

THE single window was directly opposite the hall door, the lower sash partly up. On the floor, a few feet in front of the window, lay the crumpled body of Dr. Randolph, a small, thin man in his fifties. He was dressed in felt slippers, trousers and a dark blue shirt open at the throat, with his sleeves rolled partly up his forearms. A small chair was nearby. Beside the body was an overturned small wooden table. The doctor's microscope, had crashed to the floor, almost upon the body.

"Shot in the back," Dugan was saying. "Dr. Claus who was here says the bullet entered just to the left of the spine, went through the heart.

Dr. Feather and Kit silently were peering down at the face of the dead man. Abruptly they looked at each other.

"Dear me, Sergeant, you couldn't get an idea from which direction the bullet came? The window, or the door—exactly opposite positions?"

"No way to tell," Dugan said. "But he must have spun as he fell, knocked over that table and microscope." He gestured to the window. "Take a look. It's a straight twenty-five feet to the ground, but an active man could climb up; they's rain-pipes an' ivy trellises."

But Dr. Feather and Kit seemed not listening. They were kneeling over the body, examining the bullet hole and the crimson stain on the dark shirt, between the shoulder blades; then peering intently at the dead face. Dr. Feather carefully

pulled an eyelid outward to expose more of the eyeball. Then he was examining the dead man's scrawny throat; was feeling the dead man's muscles.

"He's been dead about an hour, Sergeant?"

"Hour an' a quarter, maybe. The shot came about one A.M. They all agree on that."

"Queer that he should have been strangled, Kit," Dr. Feather murmured.

"Very queer, Father."

Sergeant Dugan's jaw dropped. "Strangled?"

"A bruise on the throat," Dr. Feather said. "See it here?"

"Dr. Claus mentioned that," the sergeant declared. "Like when he fell maybe the microscope might have hit him."

Dr. Feather smiled faintly. "That, or fingers squeezing his windpipe; a hand violently over his mouth. My goodness, when you've seen as many such contusions as I have—Kit, child, take a look around the room, will you? The sergeant said blood was scattered—"

Dugan gestured. "Some over there on the floor, Miss Kit. A little dried smear; two or three of 'em around, like somethin' dripped blood."

"And yet the shot caused instant death," Dr. Feather said. "In fact, the wound seems to have bled a little less than normal, rather than—"

A low exclamation from Kit interrupted him. The girl was still kneeling over the body; she had lifted the loose, half rolled-up shirt sleeve. On the flesh of the left forearm, just below the elbow, was a small scratch, hardly more than an abrasion which had drawn only a small amount of blood, quickly drying.

Dr. Feather stared. "Well, Kit—"

"Dilated pupils, Father. Locked muscles. I was sure we'd find—"

"Of course, child. But the blood around the room is more puzzling. Let me think."

Dugan was across the room, bending down to the floor midway between the hall door and the clothes

closet. "Here's some of the blood, Miss Kit."

It was a small smear, as though a few drops had fallen. Carefully, Kit examined it. Then like a little hound, she was searching the floor.

"A drop here on the rug, Father."

It was close to the body. Then she found one nearer the clothes closet door.

Dr. Feather was examining the microscope and the glass microscope slide which lay by the instrument.

"He was using his oil immersion lens, Sergeant, the highest powered combination—"

**F**ROM across the room by the clothes closet door Kit suddenly exclaimed:

"A smear of blood here, partly under the door, Father. The door must have been open."

Little Dr. Feather leaped to his feet. "Don't touch that closet, Kit! Keep away!"

"What the devil now!" Dugan gasped. Dr. Feather confronted him, his cheeks flushed, his mild blue eyes flashing.

"My goodness, the answer certainly lies right here somewhere! Microscopic evidence! Kit, we'll need a lot of apparatus from the car."

"Yes, Father."

"You'll have to make the analyses, Kit—Sergeant Dugan—that clothes closet. Did you go in there?"

"I just poked my flashlight in. I told you I left everything for you."

"Just opened the door a little?"

"Y-yes. But what—"

"Dear me, that's excellent, Sergeant. Good luck, indeed. The door was closed when you got here?"

"Yes. Say listen, Dr. Feather, what are you—"

"Please don't question me when I'm questioning you, Sergeant. My goodness, that's annoying. How big is the closet?"

"Small. Just a few feet. Clothes hangin' on racks; shoes on the floor."

"Good! Bring those three men suspects up here. I can think of a

lot of things to ask them now. My goodness, I certainly can. A lot of queer business went on here. Kit, hurry down to the car, child. Get our exhaust pump for that air. Bring your paraffin outfit, the big microscope, all the apparatus for analyses—and bring the haemocytometer."

"Yes, Father."

"You'll have quite a bit of work, Kit. I want to make paraffin casts. If I can determine which one fired the shot—"

"That would clear everything up, Father. And the simple medical examinations—"

"Of course, child. We've got this murderer. Dear me, Sergeant, don't stand gawping at us like that. Bring up those men suspects."

Kit had hurried from the room to get the apparatus from their big limousine, which was in effect a traveling laboratory. She came back in a few minutes, erecting her apparatus in an unoccupied bedroom across the hall. Dugan meanwhile had brought up the three grim, frightened men.

Dr. Feather had been standing motionless in the center of the room, pondering. As the men appeared, he hopped to confront them.

"Ah, here you are. What I want to know—which one of you fired the shot?"

The abrupt question startled them so that each gave a low exclamation, staring at each other.

"Stand aside, Sergeant," Dr. Feather ordered. His manner was amazingly different now—crisp, menacing. "One of you is a murderer. Which one?"

"Murderer?" the pallid Dr. Parker echoed.

"You're accusing us?" Lee Johnson demanded.

"One of you," Dr. Feather said. "But what happened in this room tonight is anything but simple. Which one of you fired the fatal shot?"

Sergeant Dugan jumped at them. "Come clean! Which one?" He swung on Lee Johnson. "You maybe?"

"I haven't fired a gun in five years," Johnson protested.

"Nor I," Dr. Parker declared.

"There wuz no weapon in the house that I ever heard of," the stalwart gardener said.

"My girl Kit has a few little tests she wants to make," Dr. Feather said crisply. "You three men won't mind, of course. Come here, Kit."

"I'd like to make them in the room over there," Kit said.

**S**ILENTLY they followed into the opposite bedroom, with Dr. Feather and the awed Dugan watching from the doorway. It was, to Dugan and the three suspects certainly a strange series of tests to which the deft girl now put them. Quickly she took their blood pressure; their temperature; then with a sterile needle stabbed the lobe of their ears; and with a stethoscope listened to their hearts and respiration.

"Quite a physician," young Dr. Parker sneered. "I didn't know this was a medical case."

"You'll know a lot more when Dr. Feather gets through with you," Dugan commented.

"I have the wax ready," Kit said quietly. "Shall I make the casts now, Father?"

"No, I'll do it. You get that sample of air."

"All right, Father. But if he opened the closet door very wide, then probably—"

"Try it anyhow, Kit. Just corroborating evidence. My goodness, we'll certainly have plenty of evidence."

"Yes, Father."

With a bell-like exhaust pump in her hand, the girl hurried across the hall to the murder room.

"Closet?" young Dr. Parker murmured. But no one answered him. On a bureau of the bedroom Kit had erected a small alcohol lamp, over which in a retort, paraffin was heating.

"I just want to apply it to your hands for a few minutes," Dr. Feather said. "Hold out both hands please—yes, all three of you."

Quickly he coated the six hands with the paraffin an eighth of an inch thick, encasing the backs of the hands and all of each thumb and forefinger.

"We'll leave it on about ten minutes," he said.

"Father! Come here, please." From across the hallway Kit was excitedly calling.

"You three sit still," Dr. Feather warned. "Hold your hands motionless or you'll break the mold. What is it, child?"

"In the closet, Father, I found this in an old shoe." She spoke softly as she held out a small, triangular fragment of broken glass.

Dr. Feather gasped. "Why, dear me! Easy Kit—watch out!"

"I'm careful, Father. He hid it there, quite evidently. And blood dropped on the floor in there; quite a lot of blood."

"And the air, child?"

"Deficiency of oxygen, Father, surplus of carbon dioxide, quite obvious, even without a test. He must have been shut up in there at least five minutes or more. It's instinctive to open a door only a little when you slip out furtively and quickly. The air didn't get altered much when he left."

"Quite so, child. Well, we've got every link now, haven't we? Take your microscope in there and complete everything."

"Yes, Father."

The three men were grimly seated, waiting, their hands held motionless.

"I don't know what this is all about," Green muttered.

"Nor anyone else, I guess," Lee Johnson retorted.

"I believe that's long enough," Dr. Feather said. "Your perspiring hands will have loosened the paraffin and cleansed the pores."

Carefully he peeled off the castings. Then with a little brush, dipped in a chemical, he began swabbing the interior of the paraffin casts.

"This is a solution of diphenylamine and sulphuric acid," he informed. "Watch what it does."

There were six casts. On five of them it did nothing. But the interior of the sixth in a moment was dotted with blue spots.

"Microscopic bits of gun powder," Dr. Feather said into the tense silence. "A blow-back from the firing chamber of the gun, driven into the pores of the skin. They couldn't be washed off—couldn't be seen, even microscopically. But the perspiration brought them out onto the paraffin, the chemical made them visible—and my goodness, there they are!"

Lee Johnson and Green were staring at Dr. Parker.

"Why—why I—" the young physician gasped numbly.

"You fired that shot," Dr. Feather said. "Dear me, you've got to admit it now."

"Got you!" Dugan exclaimed triumphantly. "I'll be damned, Dr. Feather, that was quick work!"

The sergeant was jingling handcuffs, but little Dr. Feather pushed him away.

"Not so fast, Sergeant. Does every test have to try to prove a man guilty? My goodness, this was just the opposite. This was to prove one of them innocent. You're lucky, Dr. Parker."

Amazement spread over Parker's face.

"Why—why yes, I did shoot him," he mumbled. "But it was an accident—I swear it was! I thought he was a burglar, there at the window. I shot too quickly. I swear I didn't mean to kill him!"

"You didn't," Dr. Feather said gently. "You thought you did, but you didn't. Tell us exactly what happened to you."

Parker had been sleeping restlessly, he said. His room was hot and he had opened his hall door. Then he heard a dim crash. He had bought a revolver about a week before; had said nothing about it, because he had no license. When he heard the noise he had seized the revolver, rushed out into the hall. He heard the laboratory door open as though someone were coming out, someone who heard him and ducked back in again.

"I knew it wouldn't be Dr. Randolph," he said. "I rushed on, thinking only of a burglar—"

"You're lucky," Dr. Feather commented drily. "You're not the kind of man to own a revolver."

WITH more courage than wits, the doctor had recklessly plunged to the laboratory doorway. The room was dark. At the window he'd seen a blob of figure, crouching at the sill, had impulsively fired; dashed forward; seized the blob.

Dr. Randolph had tumbled at his feet; dying. The horrified Parker had stood a moment gazing at the bullet wound in his employer's back. As though it were a viper, he had flung the revolver far out the window, then he had fled, terrified, back to his room.

A murderer! Who would ever believe it was accidental? He even had a motive for murder. He was engaged to Ruth Randolph. Her inheritance would make her rich now. And Parker himself had sole possession of Dr. Randolph's medical discovery, which had great commercial possibilities.

"Well," Dugan said, when the dazed Dr. Parker finished, "that's a grand yarn. When you said nobody'd believe it, you hit the nail square."

"But it happens to be true," Dr. Feather said. "My goodness, it fits the facts. It has to be true."

Kit stood again in the doorway. "I've just about finished, Father. Here's all the data."

Dr. Feather scanned the cards of her penciled notations. "Thanks, Kit. Not much argument, is there?"

"No, Father."

Dr. Feather's eyes were flashing as he faced Lee Johnson, the secretary, and Green, the gardener.

"We had three suspects," he said. "Now we've got two. You don't have to say anything. My goodness, I'm not trying to trap you into a confession. I can tell you now pretty exactly what happened. My girl Kit and I—unfortunately we've seen so many murdered men—this one's dilated pupils, his locked, rigid mus-

*(Continued on page 127)*

# DEATH on the S-13

A Complete Novelette  
of  
Criminal Espionage

By  
**STEVE FISHER**

Author of "Merry Christmas, Killer,"  
"The Man in the Window," etc.

## CHAPTER I

### PETER CASE

PETER CASE was not well. His mind was filled with the nervous confusion that is born of an aching restlessness. There was nothing he could do about it except wait for something to happen. It was suspense he did not like, because he had no way of telling what was going to happen.

The storm was liable to break at any minute. It might come from any quarter. And when it came the foreboding that was now deep within him promised it would be a deluge of the worst sort of trouble.

He paced the lanai terrace, burning up one cigarette after another, and looking each minute or so out past the shining sands of Waikiki Beach at the dark water and the lights of the ships that crawled along the horizon and disappeared past the looming shadow of Diamond Head.



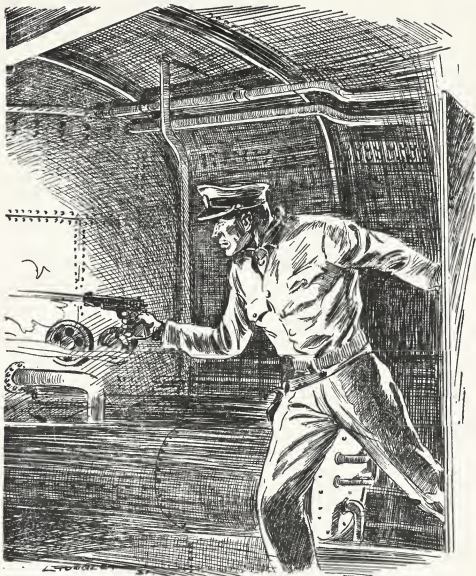
*Peter Case pressed*

He had two ideas concerning the possible origin of the trouble to come—the submarine S-13 which had left Pearl Harbor by now—and the disappearance of Gladys Benton, wife of the S-13's skipper. But that disappearance should not be bothering him. As the captain had said it was probably due to an impulsive notion of her own that

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## Ocean Depths Conceal a Fiendish Plot

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*the trigger of the automatic*

prompted her to go to one of the other islands for a vacation.

Since Benton was not worried there was no real reason for Peter Case of Naval Intelligence to be concerned. In the first place, even if the worst had happened, even if she had been abducted or murdered her plight would not be brought to his official attention.

But Peter Case was thinking of one angle which would mean that her disappearance might have a lot to do with the business for which he had come to Honolulu. Foreign spies in the city were as thick as flies and it was possible that the wife of a naval officer would be valuable to them. Particularly if she happened to be the wife of the S-13's skipper,

---

in the Battery Room of a Submarine!

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for the spies were all here for the same reason—after the invention the S-13 carried with her tonight; the same invention Peter Case was commissioned to buy for the United States the moment it was tried and approved.

He lifted his binoculars and looked again out to sea. "Isimo," he snapped suddenly, "Isimo! Here she comes!"

Case was a giant, and his straight strapping figure was silhouetted by the light from the room that adjoined the terrace. He wore a white mess jacket and blue broadcloth trousers. He was blond, his high cheek-boned face definitely Nordic. He looked both youthful and handsome, though in a hardened way, for his face was like fine leather.

"Hurry, Isimo," he said, still peering through the glasses.

The terrace door opened and a small Filipino garbed in navy whites came rushing out gibbering:

"My goodness! She come so *queek*, sir?"

Case handed him the glasses. "Peek for yourself, General."

GENERAL ISIMO who, by his own statement, commanded troops in the far reaches of the Philippine Islands long before the temptation of a steady salary as a mess boy in the American Navy intervened in his questionably brilliant career, had been allowed to accompany Peter Case when he was taken from active naval service and put in the Intelligence. Isimo was to be Case's mess boy, personal valet, and servant; but he had served in that capacity only a few months when he graduated from all that by blandly announcing that he would be henceforth: *A ganteelman's ganteelman*. He was looking through the binoculars now.

"Brave General Isimo is glad he sees not on sad vessel."

Case's eyes flickered. "Why?" he demanded.

"No like number; no like idea. Like shore side and palm trees."

He handed back the glasses and returned to the room leaving Case

not a little uncomfortable for the boy had an uncanny ability for predicting disaster in a subtle way. Case too, had a feeling that all might not go right with the S-13.

He looked again toward the death-laden little submarine, cruising serenely through the spash of moonlight. Suddenly a grim foreboding gripped him. He felt as though he wanted to shout to it, order it back to port. He kept watching as the shadows swallowed the dim little running lights, and he was conscious that sweat trickled down his face.

The S-13 was on an experimental cruise. Within her bulkheads was the first completed model of a perfect sounding instrument. It was the product of an inventor who lay dying in the Queens Hospital of spinal paralysis, and if it worked the United States wanted it badly. But if the trial proved to be a failure, it was quite possible that the S-13 would be destroyed, with all lives aboard.

The permanent value of a sounding machine had long been a subject for naval discussion. All were agreed that an effective instrument of this kind would be a leading factor in winning or losing a war at sea. In recent years various types of sounding machines had been invented. None of them had gained complete success. The type of machine that Peter Case was commissioned to inspect, and which had been installed in the S-13, had the broadest sound range of any in the world.

Use of this equipment made it possible for a submarine lying either on the surface or bottom of the sea to pick up the sound of every vessel cruising within a radius of a hundred miles. Using this information as a basis, it would be possible to determine with fair accuracy the approximate size of the cruising vessels, and their course.

In the event of war, the value of a machine that could supply such information, was obvious. A submarine so equipped would be able to inform the battle fleet of the exact position and definite approach



of the enemy ships; would make it possible to catch such ships by surprise; or would permit mine-layers to place deep water mines in the path of enemy craft, causing them to be blown to bits when they crossed these uncharted mine-fields.

Vaguely, Peter Case heard the tinkle of the phone from inside; but the clapping of palm fronds, and the strumming of guitars on Waikiki Beach below him carried the sound away in the warm breeze. A moment later, however, General Isimo appeared at the door.

"Come *queek!*" he said, "Missy Gladys Benton, missing wife of S-13's captain, on the phone!"

Case moved quickly forward.

FOR hours Gladys Benton had been waiting to be left alone for a moment, and now that moment had come. She had struggled with the ropes that bound her until they were loose. And now, with the man who had been guarding her out of the room for an instant, she had to make use of her time—

She jerked the ropes from her aching body and stood up. For a moment the blood rushed from her head and she was so weak that she thought she would faint. Strands of black hair hung about her livid white face; she brushed them back, and moved toward the window.

Freedom! It would be a brief freedom, and it would end in death. This she knew, and yet she was unafraid. If she had known fear before her captors had beaten it out of her so that now but a single flame, bright and hot, burned in her soul. The flame of vengeance!

Her dress ripped to the hip as she climbed onto the window sill. She stared into the night, and then down at the ground below her. In a moment she had let herself fall, and now she was on that ground and getting to her feet. She could feel her heart pounding, pounding. She must hurry. Even now the S-13 was under way with her husband Bill Benton in command. Poor Bill!

She ran, stumbled across the

ground, a fever beating white hot in her mind. God bless you, Bill, she kept thinking; God bless you and damn me. My rotten betrayal, my filthy schemes and intrigue were not big enough to touch you.

She was sobbing now. The night breeze whined across the cliff that was the Pali, and the leaves of a thousand trees rustled like the laughter of gods.

Somewhere over the top of this mound and down through the woods there must be a house where there would be a phone. That was all she wanted: a phone. She must find it before they discovered her escape; before they could find her and kill her. To be caught now that she had gotten away from them would mean certain death. Before, if she had remained their captive, there might have been a chance of living. She might have been sent back to the foreign country in whose employ she had originally been when she married Bill Benton to spy on him.

"You are a traitor!" her chief agent had charged.

"No," she had answered evenly, "I am a woman, and in all the wars of the world, in all the suffering and bloodshed and shame through which men like you have tried to use women, there has never yet been found a way to rob them of their souls. I didn't promise that I would be a party to blasting into bits a submarine filled with living men. Nor could I possibly know when I married him that Bill Benton would be the man he is and that I would fall in love with him!"

"Our nation is not interested in your emotions," the agent had snapped, "if the invention on the Thirteen explodes, the United States will not exercise the option to purchase it. Then we—"

"Yes, I know; then we—you—your country, could have it. But the price you are asking, the price of men's lives in a time of peace, is too great."

It had gone on like that for hours. They wanted to know what she had told Benton? She hadn't told him anything, and she wished now that

she had; but they had kidnaped her, sensing in some uncanny way, that she was ready to reveal their whole rotten plot to him. So Bill Benton knew nothing.

The lights of a house flickered yellow through the night. Sucking breath into her lungs she stumbled toward it.

She reached it and pounded on the door. A gaunt Hawaiian answered and she hysterically demanded the use of the telephone. The stupefied native pointed the instrument out to her.

And a few moments later she was talking to Peter Case.

## CHAPTER II

### MURDER ON DECK



**L**IEUTENANT BILL BENTON, in the conning tower of the S-13, somehow did not like the silky smoothness of the night sea, nor the moon that was so white, too white. He had been skipper of the S-13 for a long time so that he

sensed when something was wrong. He felt that something was wrong now; something more than the natural apprehension of the experimental dive they were coming out here to make.

Bill Benton was a stocky man; he had sloping shoulders, and short, firm arms. He was young, and extremely sincere about everything he undertook. His eyes were black, wide-set, and his lips thin. He had full, ruddy cheeks, and his skin had been bronzed by the sun.

He glanced now at Stacy, standing alongside of him. Stacy, a junior lieutenant, was his executive officer, who had been aboard only a few months. He looked at Bradshaw, the tall, slim quartermaster, now at the steering lever. There was someone aboard who didn't belong, though Bill Benton did not know whether either one of these two knew that or not.

This feeling about the sub was not one that had come to him suddenly; it had been coming for days. During those days he had been careful to observe almost everything that took place. At least he had tried, and he was beginning to realize that one or more men who were either spies, or were being bribed by foreign agents, were in the complement of the new "volunteer" crew.

He leaned back now, his thoughts coming slowly. The swish of water along the ship's side slithered above the deep hum of the Diesel engines below. The steady breeze was rattling the dried-out canvas of the signal bags. At last Benton said:

"Take over, Stacy. I'm going below."

"Yes, sir. Shall I leave the deck hatches open?"

"Might as well," Benton grunted, "I admit there's not much air to be pulled below; but at the same time there's no chance of water spilling over the deck so long as the sea remains like this."

He climbed down through the conning tower hatch, reaching the bottom in the square Center Operating Controls room. He rubbed his feet on the greasy deck and glanced around him. The radioman was in his glass-enclosed shack, and a sailor was sitting on a ditty box on one side of the room jotting down some notes. Other than that the room was empty and the shiny steel of the walls, the cross bars of the periscope, and the heavy *throb-throb-throb* of the Diesel engines oppressed him.

He headed toward the door leading into the forward battery and as he walked he felt the sub sway gently from side to side; and he heard the swish—heavier now—against the hull, as the boat pushed through the calm water.

He stopped at the tiny officer's wardroom, which was separated from the rest of the forward battery by strips of canvas, and looked inside. Mari Mason was sitting alone at the oak table, a cup of hot coffee in front of her.

"Hello," he said, his voice a little thick, and the hot oil-laden air catching in his throat, "mind if I join you?"

"As a matter of fact, Lieutenant," she said, "I was just going to request that you do. There is much we must talk over before the dive."

He entered, and sat down. "There may not be a dive," he said.

She looked at him incredulously. Mari Mason was the daughter and only real assistant that Fred Mason, the inventor of the new type sounding machine, ever had. Her hair was rich with golden yellow, contrasting with the fine color of her skin, the deep green of her eyes. She was slim, and although she looked very young, she was the type of a girl who, at a glance, one would call competent.

"What do you mean—there may not be a dive?" she asked.

**B**ILL BENTON'S black eyes had a soft gleam, and his thin lips parted in a half grin.

"Perhaps I don't mean exactly that," he replied, ringing for a mess boy, "but I think, rather I feel certain, that there is someone aboard who doesn't belong here. And that means trouble."

"Do you know this person's identity?"

"I believe I do. But there may be more than one. At least I shall arrest one man presently, and then I will feel safer about the dive."

The Filipino boy arrived, took the order for coffee and disappeared. When he returned with the steaming liquid Benton and Mari Mason sat in silence staring at one another. At length Benton shrugged.

"I don't mean to alarm you; it may not be anything at all."

She leaned forward, her lovely face tense, her green eyes flickering. "Do you think anyone could have heard what you said?" she whispered.

Bill Benton shook his head. Again there was silence, for one came to regard the throbbing of the Diesels as part of the elements. Like time

and space, they seemed to go on forever. The sub kept rocking, gently rocking; and water swished along the hull.

"I didn't speak loud enough for anyone but you to hear. I had thought of that."

She nodded, but did not look as though she were convinced. She drew in her breath, and coughed it out. At last she got to her feet.

"Is it all right if I go up on deck? I am supposed to get the pitch and roll an hour prior to the dive—though I don't suppose there is much pitch and roll now. Besides. I want to get a breath of air and smoke a cigarette."

"I don't blame you." Bill Benton grinned, and rose. "The air seems pretty putrid down here until you get used to it. I'll go up with you."

They left the wardroom together, going forward. Mari Mason wore blue slacks and a slip-over sweater. A green band held her hair close to her head. She ducked through the watertight door and into the torpedo room. Bill Benton followed, his eyes on the grimaced sailors who sat about playing an old battered phonograph.

Beyond them stood the four gleaming doors of the torpedo tubes, and the sleek, greasy "fish" themselves were lashed to the bulkheads. In this compartment you could see how the hull of the boat curved, like a bloated cigar. The sailors were sitting on bunks, on ditty boxes. Over the incessant pounding, throbbing beat of the Diesels, the music screeched from the phonograph: "St. Louis woman, with a diamond ring."

Mari Mason grasped the iron rungs of the ladder and began to climb. Some of the sailors watched, others paid no attention; they were too tense, the mission of the boat too grim, to notice much of anything right then.

As the girl climbed through the manhole hatch and out onto the deck, Bill Benton, his officer's cap cocked back on his head, climbed the ladder and followed her. It was quiet on deck; a quiet away from the Diesels, with only the bubbling

swish of the water, and the soft hum of the wind as it slid past the looming hulk of the grey conning tower.

Mari Mason lit a cigarette. "It's a nice night," she said.

Bill Benton shivered involuntarily. He had been about to add, "a nice night for murder," but somehow he didn't. He glanced up at the bridge, the red and green running lights flickering, the figures of Stacy and Bradshaw. At last his gaze returned to the girl who was facing forward now.

"As for pitch and roll," he said weakly, "you were right."

"And as for the fresh air," she replied, over her shoulder, "it's delicious."

The night was beautiful and for a moment neither of them spoke. The S-13 kept sliding onward through the water, and neither Bill Benton nor Mari Mason saw the slim figure that darted across the after part of



the deck to the side of the conning tower. Back to the tower, the figure crept quietly around the side of it.

For a moment that was eternity, he waited. Then, noiselessly, he unsheathed a knife and gripped it in his hand. He moved forward stealthily, raised the knife, then he struck. The blade sliced squarely between Bill Benton's shoulder blades.

Jerking the weapon out the killer hurriedly raced back for the engine room hatch. He flung the knife over the side and disappeared below deck.

Mari Mason turned to speak to the skipper. She looked quickly around, and then suddenly she saw his huddled form on the deck.

She screamed.

## CHAPTER III

### DEATH ON THE PALI



PETER CASE said into the phone: "But where are you, Mrs. Benton? Where can I reach you?"

"It doesn't matter about me," she said, "they'll kill me before you can possibly arrive. And I deserve no more than that. What you

must do is get to that submarine. Their peril is far greater than my own."

"Yes," Case said, "I can stop the boat, but—"

"They are coming now," she said thickly, "I can hear them. Tell the police it was on the Pali. They shall perhaps find me here. But as for you, for God's sake see that—"

The line suddenly went dead.

Peter Case was up, strapping an automatic about his waist, putting on a leather jacket. General Isimo followed him to the door. Case turned.

"Phone Wailupe. Tell them I have ordered the immediate return of the S-13 to Pearl Harbor. Under no circumstances are they to dive!"

"Double check," said Isimo, "but where you going?"

"For a social call to the Pali," Case clipped, "I'm going to call on some spies."

General Isimo was wide-eyed. "I call police double *queek*. Maybe need some help in call, huh?"

But the Intelligence ace had left.

A few minutes later he was roaring up the road to the Pali. A cottage loomed in the glare of his headlights. Two figures lay sprawled in front of it. Case swung in at the side of the road, his brakes squealing. He leaped from the car, drawing his .45.

But he had no need for it. A tall Hawaiian lay halfway down the porch steps, his head battered and bloody, and his body already stiff. On the ground near him lay Gladys Benton, the front of her

dress crimson and her black hair disheveled. Her face was very white, her lips a smear of crimson. Her eyes were still open and Case saw them blink.

He holstered his gun and bent over her. She was not quite dead and she stared at him through glazed eyes. A chill ran through his body as he looked down at her. He felt himself trembling all of a sudden. He did not know what to say, speech seemed so useless in these ebbing moments.

He felt unaccountably embarrassed, as though he should not be here watching a beautiful woman die. He took her into his arms and he felt her blood on his hands, warm and sticky. Her lips were quivering now and he leaned close to catch her whisper.

Bubbles of blood flecked from her mouth. "The spies are—shack—here—" She sucked in breath and Case felt somehow that it would be her last. Her voice became huskier: "So the terrible machine of murder that is war grinds on, with neither pity nor mercy; with a ruthlessness that—" She was choking, her voice coming like short sobs from deep in her throat. Case's face was flushed, and his heart was beating very fast. He could hear the wind on the Pali and the rattle of leaves.

"I have been such a fool, Peter Case," she went on at last, "such a selfish, short-sighted little—"

But her voice stopped there and Case saw her eyes close; they were like the eyes of a child who is very sleepy. Her muscles relaxed and when he bent down he could not feel her breath. He took her wrist and felt it grow cold in his own warm grasp.

In a moment he was able to get to his feet. He was too stunned to think coherently. Over and over he heard her voice and the whining of the wind and the rustle of banyans; and he knew that he was walking in the direction of the shack she had pointed out. He knew that his gun was in his hand again, and that something cold ached in his chest.

He saw the shack from the top of

a hill. Figures moved about inside. One of them came out carrying a bag. It seemed to weigh him down. There were three men altogether.

He gripped the service .45 a little tighter. He did not know how he was going to accomplish the capture of these men, but strangely enough it did not seem to matter. A Government agent isn't paid to think of his own life. He started forward. He had gone scarcely four steps when a Thompson machine-gun loomed from an open window of the shack.

*Brrrrrrrrrr!*

WITH the first spasm of the gun Case was no longer a man. He was a cold and grim fighting machine of the Naval Intelligence. He was on his stomach, crawling across the ground. The tommy-gun bullets screamed over his head. It was as though hell had broken loose. He lifted the automatic, rolled back.

The gun belched with flame, and the man with the machine-gun dropped it. There was a bullet in his head. Case saw that as the spy gunner slipped down beneath the window sill out of sight. But the machine-gun had been silenced less than a second when the other two spies, both outside now, sent shots screaming into the darkness where Case lay.

The shadows were Case's allies. In the light of the house he could see the other two men quite plainly. Crawling, rolling across the ground, sucking breath into his great lungs, holding the automatic tight in his sweaty hand, he moved inexorably closer to them.

He opened fire again. Three solid blasts. The man with the suitcase whirled about, wounded. The impact of the bullet sent him to the ground where he at once struggled to regain his feet. The other spy looked around wildly. Then there was a crashing of twigs behind Case and the roar of police guns.

Case got to his feet and raced forward. The spy who had not been wounded was running in a straight line back through the trees. Case

stood and triggered the remaining shots in his gun at him. Then he whirled in time to kick a weapon out of the hand of the man he had wounded.

He jerked the spy to his feet. "Dirty pup!" he breathed. It was the first he had spoken since getting out of the car.

The police arrived: five huge Hawaiians. Case jerked his head in the direction the last spy had escaped. "See if you can get him."

**THREE** of the Hawaiians raced off through the trees. The other two stayed to handcuff the man Case had wounded and to drag the corpse of the machine-gunner from the shack. Case was looking at the suitcase.

"That's undoubtedly filled with a lot of photographs and maps the government will be interested in," he said, "keep it in a safe place for me."

The detective-captain nodded. "Will do, Case. God, what a mess you ran into up here!"

Case's eyes flickered a little grimly, and then he saw General Isimo running toward the shack.

"Meester Case! Meester Case!" he squealed. "So happy to see you vertical slant, not horizontal. Have bad news. Much work."

"What is it?"

The little Filipino was breathing hard. "Called Wailupe as you said. But they can get no rise from the S-13's radio!"

It had not occurred to Case that he might not be able to radio the S-13 and order her return to safety. Now a new and more horrible fear gripped him. He and Isimo would have to fly out to the sub at once! "Come on," he said thickly.

They returned to the car. Case headed it down the Pali and toward the air island at Pearl Harbor.

Twenty-five minutes later the motor of their Boeing sputtered, caught on, and roared. Case eased back the stick, geared the trim sea-plane forward. It skimmed rapidly across the dark water, and as it leaped gracefully into the air, Gen-

eral Isimo, in the navigator's seat, held on with both hands. His oily black hair waving in the wind, he screeched out his excitement.

Sucking the cool night air into his lungs, Case, hand on the stick, led the ship, nose up, toward the stars. It lifted in a slant, like a child hurrying up a flight of steps. They reached the mouth of Pearl Harbor in no time, and looking over the side, Case saw the beam of the lighthouse.

His feet worked on the tail assembly steerage, and he guided the craft in a heavy bank to the left. Motor pounding hard then, propeller whirling, he opened up. They swept over Aloha Tower in a minute or two, and winged swiftly out over the dark sea.

Since the radio was dead on the ship there was naturally no way of being sure of its exact position. But Peter Case knew the course they had planned to take, and he now checked his own gyro and set bearings to follow it. According to his own calculations, the submarine would by now be nearing La Hiana Roads, off the picturesque island of Maui.

Nearing the position he had expected them to be, Peter Case, at length, brought the Boeing on a slant toward the water. They lost altitude rapidly, and he could hear the loose flipping of the guy wires, the rattle of a piece of canvas somewhere near the undercarriage. He adjusted the goggles he had borrowed and looked down over the side.

The sea was black and empty. Bringing the plane down to where he was no more than a hundred feet above the water, he skimmed along at ninety miles an hour, watching on every side of him, and directly below, for the missing submarine.

Before he realized it he had completely passed the island of Maui. Cold terror, or perhaps it was a foreboding of terror, gripped him suddenly. Thick lips tight, he brought the plane about, dropped even closer to the water and started back. He covered the same route

he had flown before in almost no time, and by now his concern had greatly grown.

He was about to lift the wings of the Boeing and turn about again, when he spotted red and green running lights on the horizon of the sea ahead of him. And as he saw it, he realized why the submarine had not been where he had thought it would be. It had turned about and started back toward Pearl Harbor. That might mean there was more wrong on board than a temporarily silenced radio!

He eased the Boeing gently to the water, skimmed rapidly over the top of it, once the pontoons had bumped down. Taxiing up alongside, he signaled the bridge by means of blinker code with a flashlight, then cut the motor.

Almost at once sailors appeared on deck, climbing up through the torpedo tube and after battery hatches.

"Hoist the plane aboard," Peter Case called.

He climbed out across the wing and leaped to the sloping side of the S-13. Feet planted on the hull, he pulled himself to the deck. General Isimo leaped immediately afterward. He caught with one hand and squealed until two of the sailors helped him aboard. His shoes were soaking wet.

"Shoes go on expense bill," he chanted unhappily, "ruined in line of duty."

## CHAPTER IV

### ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE



WHILE the sailors rigged a small deck crane, Peter Case went to the torpedo room hatch and climbed below. The torpedo room was empty. The battered phonograph was grinding at the end of a record, making no sound except a shrill scratching. General Isimo descended the ladder like a monkey.

Case went in through the forward battery to the small wardroom. He glanced inside, drew back, then stared. Lieutenant Benton's bloody corpse lay on one of the lower bunks. While he looked at this, Junior-lieutenant Stacy came through the C.O.C. He was captain of the craft now and had climbed down from the conning tower. Mari Mason followed on his heels, blue slacks sweeping across the greasy deck. Her face was very white.

Peter Case looked around, and his Nordic face was set. "Who did it?" he asked thickly.

"I don't know," said Stacy. He was short, had red hair and grey eyes; looked as though he had just come out of the academy. Although he must have been nearly thirty, his face was very boyish.

"It happened on deck," Mari Mason said, "I was there when it happened. Bill Benton had been talking of arresting some man whom he said did not belong on board."

For a moment Peter Case said nothing, then he declared: "Your killer probably credited Benton with more knowledge concerning his identity, than the lieutenant really had."

General Isimo shifted nervously from one wet foot to the other. Case's next words were sharp. He addressed the junior-lieutenant:

"And you were going in?"

"That's right," Stacy said.

"How was the radio silenced?"

"Someone slugged the radioman and smashed it. Nothing very subtle about this business, I must say." Stacy's youthful face looked strained.

"With the killer still on board," Peter Case said acidly, "you were going in to port where he would have a chance to get ashore and escape?"

Stacy shrugged. "Well, I didn't know what else we should do, sir."

Case said sharply: "Regulations state that when a crime occurs at sea the Intelligence should be notified at once; and when that is impossible every attempt should be made to solve the crime before coming to port."



As he spoke Case felt the intensity of the atmosphere; as though high voltage wires were strung taut and to the breaking point. Everywhere, in the face of every man there seemed to be death; expressions that were bleak, or resigned, or of fear. The men had volunteered to take a chance on the sub; but none had bargained for murder, and all hated it's presence.

The red haired junior-lieutenant looked up. "You mean—we're going to remain at sea until—"

"Until the murder is solved," Case said slowly.

Stacy's eyes burned curiously. "Under the circumstances, sir, I should say that such a plan was dangerous. We have that invention aboard, you know."

"There are spies on board," Case replied. "If we touch port they'll have the chance of escaping in which case their ring would still exist imperiling the entire navy."

"But they might kill more of us. They might—"

"You are quite right." Peter Case's eyes flickered grimly. "We are all in grave danger, Stacy; but as I have told you, there is more behind this than murder. We must risk our lives because these spies must be captured!"

"I see, sir," Stacy murmured softly. And for a moment there was only silence punctuated by the heavy *throb-throb-throb* of the Diesel engines. Then, the sailors evidently having finished their jobs lashing the plane aboard, the phonograph in the torpedo room was going. Low toned voices sounded everywhere. The pigboat rocked gently back and forth, water rushing along the sides.

Mari Mason spoke softly. "Then there will be no dive to test the sounding machine?"

"I don't know," Case replied, "I can't tell yet. We have been promised that if we do go through with it, the ship will be exploded. Yet—" he paused—"that may be the very method we shall have to employ to catch the killer."

Stacy protested: "Good Lord, man! In that case—"

Case halted him with a motion. "During a dive," he snapped, "there is absolute silence. Every man is supposed to be at his station. An irregular movement by any sailor will throw suspicion upon him. After all, the ship can't be blown up by someone merely wishing it. Action must be applied and—"

"Yes, but if they should *succeed*?" Case shrugged. "It is our business to see that they don't."

Lieutenant Stacy was shaken. He turned and went back into the C.O.C. Case turned to the girl.

"Sorry you have to be here, Miss Mason. My boy can fly you ashore, if—"

"I must be here for the trial of the invention," she replied.

Case's blue eyes were warm. "I admire your spirit," he said softly.

At that moment the buzzer of the ship's phone sounded in the ward-room. Case stepped inside the small room, picked the instrument up. "Yes?"

"Someone is trying to get away with the plane," a tense voice said, "I'm going to try and stop him. Better get the men on deck and—"

The voice stopped, and Peter Case turned, raced through the forward battery, into the torpedo room and up the ladder. Sailors gaped after him. He reached the deck to find that the Boeing had been secured aft. In the dim light of the moon he could see two figures struggling. Lieutenant Stacy, in the conning tower, was shouting down at the fighters.

PETER CASE leaped forward, swept around the blunt hulk of the tower, but even as he did so, he saw one of the figures near the plane—a tall, slim one—slump down in a heap. The other figure vanished into the nearby after battery hatch. The ropes securing the plane had been slashed and the Boeing swayed precariously toward the sub's side.

Leaping over the figure on deck, Case careened around the plane, and leaped into the manhole hatch of the after battery. He crashed with a deafening thud on the steel plates of

the deck below. A sailor whose bunk was over the galley table, stirred. The ship's cook, in dungarees and an apron, had been sitting at the table reading; he looked up. Another sailor was at the door of the C.O.C. A machinist's mate stuck in his head from the engine room.

Ankles smarting, Case pulled himself to his feet, stared at the group of faces about him.

"Where did he go?"

"Who?" asked the cook.

Case groaned. "The man who came down just a second before I did."

The sailors looked at one another. "I didn't even notice him," said the cook, "I was reading. The fellows go up and down that ladder all the time. They go up on topside to smoke."

"I was asleep," the man in the bunk added.

"And I didn't see anybody," said the machinist.

Peter Case looked at the chunky, unshaven sailor who stood near the door of the C.O.C. Case's Nordic countenance was a tight mask of disgust.

"What about *you*?" he demanded.

The unshaven man shrugged. "I just came in," he said slowly. His piggy eyes gleamed with amusement. "Why, looking for somebody, sir?"

"For a murderer," Peter Case replied.

The heavy pounding of the Diesels throbbed into his ear drums; the hot air from the engine room caught in his throat and choked him. His heart had started to beat a little faster, and he felt as though his skin was burning. The sailors appeared to be dumbstruck at what he had said, and no one opened his mouth for a long time.

*Throb—throb—throb* pounded the Diesels.

Peter Case looked the men over carefully for some moments; then he said:

"One or all of you is lying. Before very long I'm going to find out who it is. And when I do it's going to be a long and sad story. It seems

rather incredible, in spite of the fact that the Diesels make so much noise, that a man could come down that ladder without being seen or heard." He turned to the cook, who was skinny and had morbid black eyes. "What's your name?"

"Page, sir," the cook answered.

Case looked at the chunky, unshaven sailor. "*Your* name—and rate?"

"Martin, sir. I'm a torpedoman, first class."

HE glanced at the bunk. The sailor there was lean, medium sized. He had a heavy jaw, dark eyes, and short clipped hair. "My name is Lambert, sir," he said. "I am also a torpedoman. Second class."

"Do you usually sleep in your dungarees, Lambert?" Case asked.

"Well, I'm going on watch pretty quickly. I'm due to go on at twelve, and was just getting a cat's nap."

"I see," Case grunted, turning to the machinist's mate, who was huge. He had black hair, and his face and hands were covered with grease. "You?"

"My name is Ryan, sir."

"Page, Martin, Lambert and Ryan," Peter Case said aloud. He paused, looked from one to the other, framing leading questions by which he could trap the guilty one so tightly that it would be impossible to lie out of it. But suddenly, with his thoughts, came another idea. It hit him all of a sudden, and hit him hard. It seemed to write a key to the solution of the identity of the S-13's mystery killer. If it worked he would have the murderer red-handed!

It meant, also, that instead of just one spy being aboard, there were at least two!

Case felt that at least one of these was among the four present: Torpedoman Lambert; Machinist Ryan; Cook Page; and Torpedoman Martin. The knowledge made him tingle with excitement. He turned and climbed the ladder to the deck of the craft. He could see part of Maui on the horizon: the palms,

tall and straight, the dust of stars carpeted behind them.

Mari Mason and some of the sailors were grouped around the still figure that lay near the plane. A flashlight was turned down on the face.

"Bradshaw," someone said, "he was the quartermaster on watch in the conning tower when he saw the figure cutting the plane loose from the temporary stays."

Case glanced at the small iron boom to which the sailors had raised the Boeing and strapped it.

"Bradshaw is dead," said someone else. He was a cotton-haired young ensign whom Peter had not seen before.

## CHAPTER V

### SECURE ALL HATCHES



MARI MASON spoke up. "This is so unfortunate, Mr. Case. So much of this happening. Don't you think we should go in? Postpone the trial of the invention until later? I'm sure my Father had no idea this experimental cruise would

be such a gruesome one."

"I'm sure he didn't either," Peter Case said softly, "but as for going in, I'm afraid I must be contrary. What we are going to do is dive."

"Dive?" echoed the ensign, getting to his feet. The sailors looked up as though someone had lashed a whip across their faces.

Case nodded, and then, seeing a flash of white down the deck, called: "Isimo! General Isimo!"

The little Filipino came on the run. "Yes, sir! General Isimo, ganteelman's ganteelman, awaits command, sir!"

"We're going to put the Boeing back over the side," Case said, "and you're going to take it back to Pearl Harbor." He saw disappointment flicker on the brown face and added hurriedly: "Think you can fly it all right?"

"General Isimo can fly *anything*," he answered quickly, adding, "sir."

Case himself had taught Isimo a lot of things during their spare time in Washington, D. C.; but knowing the Filipino's pride in these accomplishments he had appealed to his vanity.

In another few minutes the sailors were lowering the ship over the side and into the water. The S-13 had come to a stop.

The Boeing had been raised from the water in the same way that a lifeboat on a larger vessel is taken up over the side. The sailors hauled the lines through the pulleys, and then when the ship was in place, strapped it to the deck with stays. Now it was lowered back down, the sailors easing off on the lines until the pontoons rested in the gently rolling water.

One man held the plane off with a boat hook so it wouldn't scrape against the side of the submarine, while General Isimo scrambled down the sloping side of the S-13 like a brown monkey. His feet slogged into the water. For a moment it looked as though he would plunge in and he screeched. But in the next moment he had leaped, caught the wing which dipped with his weight, and crawled across it and into the cockpit.

Case waved at him. "If I don't see you again," he said, grinning, "you can have my tuxedo."

Without a pause Isimo shouted back: "It would be a *feeting theeng* for them to bury me in."

Case smiled, as he always did at the boy's sentiment about him. In the next instant the motor of the plane roared. Isimo waved, then taxied smoothly down the water, gradually lifting the wings into the air.

Case walked forward with Mari Mason. He nodded toward the conning tower ladder. She climbed up it into the bridge and he followed. Stacy looked at them.

"I expect to be ready to dive in a few minutes," Case told him. "First I want Mari to show me the lay out of the invention below deck. I will

signal you from the wardroom when we are ready to go under."

"Yes, sir," the red-haired skipper snapped, "but don't you think it's inadvisable to—"

"The dive," Case said, "is a net in which I hope to bag two killers. As for its advisability, I'll take that responsibility on my own shoulders."

"That would be wonderful," Stacy said acidly, "if we all were killed. What good would—"

"I didn't ask for an opinion, Mr. Stacy. You're here to take orders."

Mari Mason climbed through the round hatchway down into the C.O.C. and Case followed her. Color was beginning to come back into her face, as though she had suddenly begun to believe in him. She showed him the invention and briefly explained the main points. While they were talking the cotton-haired young ensign walked through the compartment headed aft to his station on the engines.

"What's his name?" Case asked.

"Ted Bronson," she told him.

They went on discussing the invention, and he told her his plan. She was very excited about it, though he thought he could detect a trace of doubt in her face. Finally they made a complete tour of the vessel from the torpedo room to the battery room.

"I think we're ready," Case said.

SHE tried to smile, he gripped her hand. They went into the wardroom. They looked toward the two corpses, as though sealing a silent oath.

The sub rocked gently in the calm of the sea, and the air was hot. Case could hear the faint sound of the phonograph from the torpedo room: "St. Louis woman, with a diamond ring."

He looked at Mari. "Well, here goes," he said.

She touched his hand, looked up into his eyes; her fingers tightened over his. "Okay, Skipper," she assented.

He talked into the phone to the bridge. A moment later the word was passed that electrified the crew.

"Secure all hatches! Man your stations for diving!"

Quickly, and silently, the sailors went to their stations in various parts of the ship. Mari Mason left the wardroom. Though a woman, her sweater, slacks and the green band about her yellow hair, somehow made her look quite equal to the job of looking after her father's interest concerning the sounding instruments. Peter Case followed her into the C.O.C. where, already, the ten sailors assigned to this—the most vital position on board during a dive—were taking their places near the controls.

It is hot below decks, hotter in a tropic sea, and most of the men, in spite of Mari Mason's presence, were garbed as they usually were during a dive: dungaree trousers, white skivvie shirts; some of them wore handkerchiefs about their necks to sponge the sweat that rolled from them.

Peter Case could not help but notice the tenseness in the atmosphere, the grim, hardened looks on the white faces as they prepared for this—perhaps the S-13's last dive. They seemed resigned, fatalistically so.

Yet one could not help but notice the etched lines in their countenances; the traces of fear in the muscles of their cheeks, the occasional slight quiver of lips.

Lieutenant Stacy crawled down through the conning tower tube, bolting the last hatch after him. For a moment he stood in the middle of the deck, his hat cocked back showing his red hair, his grey eyes hot. He looked at the smashed radio through the glass-enclosed door, and at last, glancing not at Case nor Mari Mason, went to the periscope.

He grasped the cross bars and sat down. Almost at once the huge pounding Diesels went off, went silent. It was almost as though a thundering river had instantly frozen over. The sudden quiet was ominous, portentous. It brought reality to half numbed minds. The batteries were on now; the batteries

which operated the ship when it was under water.

Stacy leaned forward, and as he spoke, gave the orders to the men, talked into the voice tube to Bronson in the battery room; his voice seemed to come from deep in his throat, as though something was clogged there and was muffling his words. "Diving planes," he said.

As he spoke, and the men responded automatically to the command, great iron planes, like wings unfolded from the side of the pig-boat so that as it went under, it was not unlike a giant fish with straight and sturdy fins that guided its course under the water.

Peter Case looked around him. He observed the men, their sweating faces, their eyes in which death seemed to dwell.

The sub nosed down, its blunt little bow wallowing into the waves, under them, and gradually the whole black and grey hull slid from sight until only the thin pipeline of the periscope remained above water, cutting through the surface with the slithering hiss of a serpent.

At that moment when the submarine was completely encased in the limpid water, a chill seemed to freeze the air, blowing from nowhere through the compartments, like the damp breath of death. Peter Case shivered involuntarily, and began to sweat. He looked at the glistening steel bulkheads, oozing now with beads of perspiration and steam; water, dripping, dripping down the sides, and rolling in rivulets to the deck. It was as though the pressure of the sea were closing in about them; as though the ocean would crush the sides and sweep into the square compartment of the C.O.C.

Mari Mason stood near Case, not moving, watching with wide green eyes. Her face appeared more calm than any of the countenances of the sailors; her eyes brighter, and less afraid. She would not try the invention until they were on the bottom.

"Ease her now," Stacy said, "slant thirty degrees, for the bottom," and

he leaned forward, pressing his eye to the rubber about the periscope eye, his arms about the heavy cross bars.

## CHAPTER VI

### ON THE BOTTOM



DEEPER, still deeper the S-13 dove, rocking back and forth as it made its way; rocking like a cradle of death, the water laving against the iron bulkheads; a loud swishing that told Case what was outside. The bloated

cigar form of the boat sank deeper through the murk of undersea; fish swam away from it, around it, eyes goggling; seaweed swept aside. An octopus and a shark hurried away from the path of the great iron monster.

No one spoke except Stacy, giving his orders, and now Peter Case kept watching the men, and waiting. He unholstered the automatic and then gripped it in his hand. The sailors looked at it, looked up into his face. Their eyes were flickering crazily. So the worst was expected! Their stare seemed to say that, and in all the cold, the damp, heavy air that froze them, sweat came more profusely.

Bottom was reached at last, the boat thudded gently into the mud, and at once, Stacy put the ship in reverse. With the aft end high, it brought them out of it, and now, his voice growing gradually more quiet, Stacy straightened the vessel to an even keel. Not even the periscope was above the surface now. They were completely under. Stacy leaned back, wiped sweat from his face.

"Well?"

Mari Mason moved forward, her lovely face composed, her green eyes on Stacy. "I will put the sounding machine in motion," she said.

The sub kept rocking on the bottom; water kept oozing down the

sides of the glistening walls; the sailors stood tensely; dungaree trousers, white skivvie shirts, wet with sweat.

"Wait a minute," said Peter Case. "I want an accounting of the men in the torpedo room."

Stacy stared, then he spoke into the voice tube, called out the names, one by one. His voice echoed hollowly from the empty bulkheads.

"All right," Case said, when he was through, "all right, Mari. Set the sounding machine in motion. Pick up all craft within range and prepare your report for the board of officers in Pearl Harbor. This is your first real experiment on this machine, make it a good one!"

She grinned, though there was no humor on her face. "Okay, Skipper."

Stacy looked up, thinking he had been addressed. But she had spoken to Peter Case. She moved toward a panel in which the operating mechanism for the device had been installed. Case, not watching her now, walked to the door of the after battery. At just that moment—the moment Mari Mason turned on the sounding machine—the overhead lights flickered, grew dim.

Case looked about. The sailors seemed rigid. Mari's hand was to her mouth and she had turned pale. Stacy's eyes were wide.

Then the lights plunged out. The ship was in total darkness.

An hysterical scream broke from the lips of one of the younger sailors. "Oh, for the love of God, get us out of here! We'll be killed! Get us out!"

Although Peter Case had not expected the lights to go out, the fact that they did, did not change his course of action. It complicated it and made it more dangerous. Standing at the after battery door, the automatic gripped in his hand, he snapped:

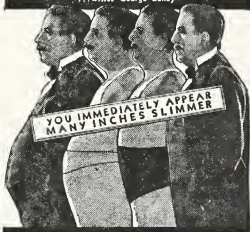
"Every man remain at his station. You, too, Mari. You, too, Stacy. Don't move until you hear from me!"

Yet in spite of his sharp words, there seemed to be a minor bedlam. The sailors were muttering, there

(Continued on page 120)

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(Continued from page 119)

was the shuffle of feet, and all of it, all of the sound was intensified by the silence of the boat. The sub kept rocking, and the water on the outside of the hull brushed against it.

Case did not wait. Turning, he groped into the after battery, past the sailors on the huge electrical control panels. "Give me a flashlight, somebody."

He went farther, and someone pressed a flashlight into his hand. Peter Case turned it on. He saw the galley stove over in one corner; the bleached white table, and the bunk that was high above it, directly over the table. He saw the coffee urn, and the white faces of the sailors in the battery.

AND then he left the room, went through the door to the engine room compartment. On both sides of him were the huge silent Diesel engines, and Peter Case walked the cat-runway, the strip of steel that lay between them. The beam of his light penetrated feebly through the darkness, down to the end of the engine room where lay the closed watertight door leading to the battery room. The battery room was the farthest compartment aft.

Enginemen and machinist's mates stared at Peter Case, blond giant, Nordic face set tight; flashlight in one hand, gun in the other, he swept forward. The submarine kept rocking, rocking, on the bottom of the sea. Now there was the deep hum of the Mason sounding machine which, in war times, would make a submarine almost a hundred percent more effective by giving them the exact position of all vessels within a radius of over a hundred miles. By this token—if the invention were a success—submarine craft would be promoted to a far more important place in the defensive and offensive fighting fleets.

Case reached the door of the battery room. It was dogged shut with wrenches. As quietly as possible, he turned them loose; pulled the wrenches from their places so that

the door would open. He had to holster the gun while he did it, and he worked there for several minutes.

Then, gripping the gun again, and snapping off the flashlight, he shoved the door open, stepped inside the battery room, and slammed the door shut behind him. For a moment he stood leaning back against it, the gun tight in his hand. It was so dark that he could see nothing; nor did he hear anything. He was waiting for some sound.

At last it came, a deep voice. "Who is it?"

Peter Case did not answer, and at that moment a wrench slugged into the iron door just over his head. He ducked to one side, crouched back against the bulkhead, kept waiting. The submarine rocked back and forth. At last Case flipped on the flashlight, sent it rolling across the deck.

Red flashed hideously, and shots followed it. The roar in the small compartment was almost ear-shattering. Peter Case pressed the trigger of the automatic; fired at the figure he had seen shadowed behind the red flare of gunfire.

*Wham! Wham!*

He heard a groan, a cursing; but the cursing broke off in a throaty scream. A figure hurtled forward, landed on him. Peter Case rose with the man still clinging to him. Hands gripped at his neck, and Case using jiu jitsu to break the grip, did it easily by placing his own arms between those that clutched at his throat. He swept his arms outward and the fingers lost their grip, the clinging figure dropped to the deck. Peter Case slashed his gun down.

BUT the blow missed, and he felt the man holding his legs. Words came from the grappler's lips.

"Shoot him now. Shoot high!"

But as the gun of the second man opened up, Peter Case had swept aside, landed on the deck, and was trying to crawl back to where the man with the gun was crouched. The other kept clinging to Peter's legs, and now, clawing, tried to climb up on him. A wrench lashed out.



Peter Case felt blood trickle down the side of his head, but the blow had been a glancing one. Viciously now, he grabbed the shoulder of the man who had hit at him. He caught the second blow as it descended, wrested the wrench away. It clattered to the deck; and Case—his hand still on the shoulder so that he knew in which direction to hit—brought the butt of his gun down mercilessly.

He felt it crack on the skull, felt the warm blood that trickled through his fingers. The man's grip suddenly loosened, and Peter Case kicked him away, kicked him to the center of the deck. The man was out, but there still remained another adversary. This one had not ventured forward, but lay back, holding a gun and waiting for a chance to use it.

For a moment there was silence and a ruse suggested itself to Case. He would try to imitate the voice of the man with whom he had been fighting and whom he had just slugged unconscious. If he did not succeed he would be inviting gunfire and possible death. But if he were successful—

He whispered thickly: "I've got him all right. Fix that cord on the lights. The explosion must have come off. We have nothing to worry about."

The answer came after a moment's hesitation: "John?"

"Yes," Case whispered.

"You say fix the lights for the whole ship?"

"Sure."

"But we—we didn't hear the explosion!"

"We wouldn't back here," Case snapped.

Again there was silence, and then movement. Gun gripped in his hand, Peter Case was crouched. What happened came so rapidly that he had no opportunity to use it. Two shots roared out, thudded into his body. He went limp. Blackness screened his conscious thoughts, and then, very slowly began to clear, leaving a horrible debris of pain so intense he felt he would cry out.

(Continued on page 122)

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(Continued from page 121)

When he gazed slowly upward, his eyes feverish; able only to gather half of his thoughts, a hazy vision swayed over him. The lights had been turned on. The cotton-haired ensign, Ted Bronson, stood over him, a weapon gripped in his hand.

"I waited until I heard you say enough to know you weren't Lambert," he whispered, "and to determine your exact position so that my shots wouldn't miss this time. It was a clever trick, Case, trying to make me think you were my partner; but it is perhaps the last trick you will ever use. You're dying now, Case; but I'm not even going to wait for that. I'm going to put a bullet through your rotten head!"

The words seemed to be a soft patter that fell about him like rain drops on paper. He was not able to hear all Bronson said. He knew only that the ensign was desperate if not hysterical; knew that he was capable of murder and more. He saw Torpedoman Lambert—who had been in the *upper bunk* of the after battery when Peter had last seen him—lying nearby, unconscious, and splattered, like himself, with bright blood.

And then, though he did not know how he did it, he struggled to get to his feet. It was more the power of a strong mind than physical strength,



for his strength was ebbing, like water running from a punctured cardboard cup. Ensign Ted Bronson seeing his feeble effort, laughed harshly and lifted Case. He shoved him back up against the bulkhead. Case watched through glazed eyes, and he felt sweat bathing his hard face. He saw Bronson, the cotton hair, the wild gleam in his eyes. He

saw the gun Bronson held. And in Bronson's face he saw death.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE KILLERS



CASE'S mind might have told him: "farewell, Peter Case; death is here with you on the bottom of the sea"; but his heart told him that even in death he must triumph. He must point out to Bronson that even if he —a single and unimportant cog in the great crime-fighting machinery that is called the Naval Intelligence —was killed, Bronson's victory had been snatched from him.

He began talking, in whisper at first:

"Your spy ring numbered five," he said, "one was killed, and one was captured ashore; the wounded Lambert there is the third. You, Bronson, are the fourth. Only the fifth man remains free for the present. A poor showing for five men who were commissioned to see that the United States did not buy the sounding machine."

Bronson rocked back on his heels and wiped his mouth. He seemed fascinated, and Case could see that the death of one of his companions ashore, and the capture of another, was news to him. Bronson seemed to become more nervous. He twisted the gun up in his hand.

"Yes, but success or not, Case," he said, "I think you'll have to tell the rest of your story in hell. Because—"

"Your plans to explode the C.O.C.," Case went on dramatically, "don't you want to know why they didn't work?"

"I—"

"I'll tell you," Case hurried on, and there was a deathless smile on his pain-wracked face. "The explosion which was meant to wreck that *one* compartment could not be effected until the boat dove. But

I'm ahead of myself. Earlier, you became aware that Lieutenant Bill Benton was suspicious of you and was about to make an arrest. So you killed him."

There was a strange light in Bronson's eyes. His hand gripped the gun tighter. "What if I did? That doesn't answer the question of why—"

"I'm coming to that," Case said, and he managed to straighten up now. "You wanted to engineer the explosion from back here so you would not be harmed. The only victims would be the men in and near the C.O.C. You and Lambert lead a wire from the invention into this—the battery room."

"You also had Lambert lead a wire in from the electrical controls so you could plunge out the lights, simplify your problem by working under cover of darkness. When Lambert was through with his portion of the job, you no longer needed him about. You might have planned to murder him, claiming that you caught him returning from the battery room; thus establishing a culprit and giving yourself something

(Continued on page 124)

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(Continued from page 123)  
of an alibi. You didn't count on my coming aboard."

BRONSON tried to break in, but Case had no intention of giving him even a temporary advantage.

"When I crossed you up, you might have covered yourself by having Lambert 'escape' through a torpedo tube or the emergency crash lock. That would lead Naval Intelligence to believe that the killer of Bill Benton had gotten away, leaving you, the remaining spy aboard, free of suspicion, and in a position to continue negotiations for the desired plans. You could blame the explosion on a deficiency in the invention."

"Yes, but—"

"That's where your plans began going wrong," Case said hoarsely, "because Lambert was unable to release the plane quickly enough. When Bradshaw tried to catch him he had to kill Bradshaw and escape into the after battery. When I arrived in that battery a scant moment after he did, no one had seen him, although several men were present. I admit that at first I was puzzled. Then it was plain what he had done."

"He had swung from the ladder that led down into the compartment right into the upper bunk! That was the *only way* he could come through the hatch without the others seeing him."

Bronson was becoming impatient. His eyes seethed. "That's fair deduction, Case, but—"

Case felt the submarine swing back and forth; felt the water pressing in against the sides.

"Mari Mason and I," he continued, "found the line you had strung to the invention and with which you intended to explode it from aft here. As I say, you could blame the invention for the explosion, you and Lambert would have been saved with the others who remained alive without anyone knowing your identities."

"I get it," Bronson said from deep in his throat, "and before the sub dove you *cut* the lines making explosion impossible. But you didn't

know we had a line to the lights, so they went out all right. In that case there has been no—"

Case nodded grimly. "No. There has been no explosion. I knew that since Lambert was *not* in the torpedo room he was *here* to escape the effects of the explosion. You two were able to join this crew with faked service records and transfer papers such as spies have used in the past."

Suddenly Case's voice slowed and stopped. Eyes wide with horror he saw that Bronson had found the break in the wire to the invention and was piecing it together again. "There was no explosion, eh? No explosion—"

Case saw a vision of the result. The C.O.C. blowing up. Mari Mason and the others being killed. The boat lurching crazily on the bottom of the sea, fumes escaping everywhere. He saw someone in the dark trying to blow the ballasts to bring them to the surface. These things he saw in his mind.

For the moment he did not consider himself in danger, because he knew that the double-hull of the S-13 would probably prevent any break in the outer wall of the craft itself. The delicate mechanism in the control room would be damaged, but unless Bronson planned to die, a martyr to the cause, he must have arranged his own escape.

While he cudged his mind for this explanation, he was inching forward. Bronson looked up at him, leering at his weakness, considering his puny efforts as impotent, unimportant.

"Think I'm trapped, too?" Bronson gritted. Case said nothing, concentrating his efforts on preserving his strength for one final, hopeless attack. "This submarine has been equipped for other experiments, besides that of the sounding device," Bronson reminded him. "We have the new emergency control rooms that work the ballast tanks. The mechanism is right behind that door. A step and I can start the S-13 to the surface. We are only resting in about thirty fathoms of water."

Case halted, half in surprise and half in horror. The cyclorama of destruction still left figments of the bloody picture in his semi-conscious mind. The ends of those wires assumed a gargantuan size like the twin horns of a mighty sea devil.

He knew what would happen if Bronson succeeded in what he was now doing. The fury of his inflamed brain gave him the power to move forward.

Bleeding, his face strained, he plunged down at the spy.

Bronson whirled about, snarling, the gun in his hand. It shrieked with a shot that whirled a fraction of an inch from Case's head. Then Case was throttling the spy; even as he felt Bronson crumple beneath him; even as he felt his fingers on the ensign's throat, blackness and pain surged into his mind so that he did not know whether he could go through with his job, whether his consciousness would remain long enough.

His was blind and insane fury, without reason, but coupled with crushing action.

Bronson's head crashed on the steel deck; he choked out, struggled. Case was still on top of him, only a shred of consciousness left in him.

But that shred was like a stick of dynamite.

**W**HEN Peter Case next opened his eyes he was in the Naval Hospital in Pearl Harbor. There were two people present, one on either side of his bed, each holding one of his hands.

He looked up into the radiant face of Mari Mason.

"The invention is a success," she whispered.

Case smiled then, too; he looked at the person on the left. General Isimo's brown face was wreathed in smiles, but tears ran down his cheeks.

"Have good sleep, Boss?"

"Good sleep," Case said.

"Have surprise," Isimo went on, wiping the tears. "You caught all

(Concluded on page 126)

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(Concluded from page 125)

four spies, great General Isimo captured the fifth."

"Tell him how," Mari Mason said.

General Isimo straightened up proudly. "Lambert, he use airplane radio to signal boss ashore before he try to steal plane off submarine. When General Isimo, greatest living Filipino flyer, take off in plane, radio start working.

"Spy says: 'Lambert meet me at Yu Fat's Dock in Honolulu.' So Isimo know spy theenk Lambert is flying, and he signal back, 'Okay, can do.' When plane landed beeg boss spy not see so well in the dark. General Isimo slugged heem on head. Big boss spy now in jail with aspirin tablets!"

Case could not speak. And now it was Mari Mason who had choked up with emotion. She got up, leaned over and kissed Case on the lips. And then she left the room.

For a long while Peter Case was silent because he did not want to spoil the touch of that kiss. Then he looked at General Isimo.

"Well, Napoleon," he said, "what kind of a case do you think we'll get next?"

"General Isimo blinked. "Case of Scotch to celebrate beeg victory."

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### MURDER UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

(Continued from page 103)

cles—it was pretty obvious he died of poison and not a bullet wound. He got scratched on the arm with a sharp bit of glass. A powerful alkaloid—the autopsy will identify it—was on the glass fragment. Within a minute or two, Randolph died. In that minute the murderer held him from screaming—

"I'm beginnin' to see it," Dugan murmured. "That scratch you showed us on his arm, signs of fingers at his throat—"

"Quite so, Sergeant. While the swift poison was killing Dr. Randolph, the murderer kept him silent. Then, when he was unconscious I would say that the murderer dragged him and hung him over the window sill. The murderer's idea evidently, was to make it look like an accident—Dr. Randolph scratching himself with a broken microscope slide on which he had a deadly poison. And it would have looked as though, dying, he had crawled to the window, gasping for air.

"Dear me, that would have looked reasonable. The murderer maybe would have placed the poisoned bit of glass on the floor, or in the dead man's hand. But things went wrong for this murderer. In his haste he knocked over the microscope. Undoubtedly that was the crash Dr. Parker heard. And then the mur-

(Continued on page 128)

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(Continued from page 127)

derer heard someone coming. He had no time to escape so he ducked into the clothes closet. There was a little trail of blood leading there so we knew it could only have been made with the door open.

"We know by Kit's findings of the closet air that he stayed in there quite a time. That was while Dr. Parker fired into the dying man, discovered his horrible error, and rushed away. Then the murderer slipped furtively out of the closet. He didn't disturb its air much. Kit found in the closet traces of the *micrococcus, catarrhalis*, and *strep-tococcus*."

"I don't understand any of this," the burly gardener muttered.

"Dear me, probably not." Dr. Feather smiled. "Those are common germs. Anyway, you can understand that while he was in the closet the murderer got rid of his damning murder weapon—the poisoned fragment of glass. He hid it in a shoe."

Into the stricken silence as Dr. Feather momentarily paused. Dugan murmured:

"But who is he? How can you—" "A conclusive test, Sergeant. This murderer has been bleeding. In his panic-stricken haste as he ran around the room, his blood was dropping. There was quite a bit of it in the clothes closet. My girl Kit got a perfect sample."

Dr. Feather's voice was edged now with grim menace. "These three men have blood that is very different. Kit took a few drops from the ear-lobes of each and made a blood count. Yours, Dr. Parker, as you no doubt know, is deficient in the number of *erythrocytes*—red corpuscles. The pigment, the *haemoglobin* of them, also is deficient in redness. You are anemic. That was apparent, just looking at your pallor. But otherwise you are in good health."

Dr. Feather's grim gaze turned to the burly, flushed gardener. "You, Green, you're in perfect health, so far as your blood shows. Red and

**CANDID CAMERA CATCHES CO-EDS IN**

white corpuscles, both normal. And you, Johnson—"

The flushed secretary was half out of his chair. "Me? You're going to tell me—"

"Your blood is red enough," Dr. Feather said. "But it happens you have a temporary ailment, a pretty well established bronchial catarrh. A mean sort of bronchitis, and the white corpuscles in your blood have increased in number to fight the infection. Traces of the germs from you were in the air of the closet. And, wholly conclusive, the blood from your ear matches with mathematical perfection the blood scattered around the murder room!"

The terrified secretary had leaped to his feet. He made an impulsive move to dart past Dugan, but the alert little Kit barred him. And then Dugan seized him.

"So he did it?" Dr. Parker exclaimed. "I'll tell you why, Dr. Feather! He's been gambling, and drawing unauthorized checks on Dr. Randolph's account. He runs the checkbook, pays the bills. Dr. Randolph only goes over the account very infrequently. But the bank got suspicious of the unusual drafts, and bills didn't get paid. Dr. Randolph told me that in confidence. He had given Johnson until tomorrow to make good. But Johnson thought it was all just between him and Randolph."

A FIT of coughing shook the handcuffed prisoner. Then he drew his breath in through his nose sharply and Dr. Feather smiled ironically.

"Let him reach for his handkerchief, Sergeant. His nose is bleeding again. In his condition the nose often bleeds easily, especially under stress of emotion."

Little Dr. Feather was beaming on Dugan. "A nosebleed is an awkward thing to have when you're committing a murder. Dear me, this case takes me back to my early medical days. It certainly does."

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